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GREEN PEPPERS

(a comedy in 3 acts)

by
Hervey White



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GREEN PEPPERS

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

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Scene: The court yard (patio) of an old Spanish mansion in a small town in New Mexico. The place is now used as a cafe; a grocery store has been set up in the old ball-room to the left. The doors on the right lead to the house now occupied by Don Pancho and his family; a fountain is in the centre; palms and orange trees are around it; tables are set beneath their shade.

As the curtain rises, there is great commotion among the old servants Jose, and Maria, Don Antonio, (a young dandy) Clotilde and Pepita, on account of the illness of Don Pancho in the house. They bring hot water, cold water, flannels, warming-pans, fans,

blankets, and are much excited. Don Antonio is especially eager, and brings useless things as a watering-pot, a bear-skin rug, a large jar of water, which the girls put back.

In the midst of this, enters a Mexican peddler with a large basket of green peppers, and calls out

Green peppers!

JOSE. Hist!

MARIA. Fool! Stupid! Loafer!

PEDDLER. Green Peppers!

PEPITA. Oh Mr. Peddler, please take them away; they are the cause of all our distress.

PEDDLER. Green Peppers!

MARIA. Hush man, not so loud. Don Pancho will rise from his bed. He has eaten so many now he is going to die. Oh is me! Oh is me! (wailing).

CLOTILDE. Antonio, can't you send him away?

ANTONIO. Of course. Go away sir, go away.

PEDDLER. Don Pancho always buys of me. They are good, they are crisp, they are fresh. Try them, sir. Taste one, break one, hear it pop. They were plucked not an hour ago. They are cool, they are dewy, they are perfect. Don Pancho adores them. Where is he?

PEPITA. He is ill; he is going to die. Already he has eaten too many. (cries).

PEDDLER. Surely they were not from my garden. If Don Pancho would always buy of me, he would take no harm.

PEPITA. They always do him harm. He always says so.

PEDDLER. And then he eats more. He always tells me to bring them. Often he says to me, 'Pedro' he says -

CLOTILDE. (to Antonio) Oh send him away.

ANTONIO. Of course. (To peddler), Go away, sir, go away.

(The peddler does not move. Screams and groans from within, as of a man in great agony. All rush about again for bottles, liniment, salve etc. The peddler is

forgotten. Antonio asks to help carry things. Pepita gives him a basin. Clotilde gives him another. He stands helpless, holding both. The groans subside. Enter Donya Elisa, a quiet little woman of fifty, dressed in black, a mantilla over her head).

DONYA ELISA. Dear Antonio, let me take the basins. (relieves him). How unfortunate that your visit should be so interrupted.

DON ANTONIO. Dear Madam, I would gladly hold them all my life.

DONYA ELISA. A pair of gloves is much more suited to your gentlemanliness.

DON ANTONIO. For you I would always hold basins.

DONA ELISA. You are a good boy, and will make me a good son.

DON ANTONIO. If he dies, I will be a husband and a son to you.

DONYA ELISA. Nonsense, child; he isn't going to die. He has eaten too much green peppers. It always affects him so.

DON ANTONIO. Some day he may die. His groans are terrible.

DONYA ELISA. I tell him he will die if he does not stop, but pshaw! he goes on eating them just the same. (Screams renewed within; cries, 'Ay Dios! Dios me salvera. Jesus Maria Santissima. Oh you're burning me. You're killing me. Elisa! Elisa! Elisa!')

DONYA ELISA. I must go to him. How slow the Doctor is in coming. I sent Pepe a half hour ago.

DON ANTONIO. Shall I go, honored lady? Shall I fetch him?

DONYA ELISA. If you will. You are a good boy. Run for him. I must go back to my husband. He -

(Here groans begin again. Donya Elisa goes in right, Don Antonio runs out back. Enter Dr. Henry Worthington, known as Don Enrique. He is thin, middle-aged, gentlemanly. A physician from an eastern city who lives in New Mexico for his health. Donya Elisa has seen him from within and runs back).

DONYA ELISA. And Antonio just gone. No matter, it

will keep him occupied. Good day, Don Enrique. How do you do? Another little attack of Don Pancho.

DOCTOR. Been eating - - -

PEDDLER. Green peppers!

DONYA ELISA. Hush! Don Pancho will hear you!

DOCTOR. Off with you, fellow. Do you want to kill the man?

(The peddler is quiet, but does not budge).

DONYA ELISA. Yes, he has been eating them again. This morning he bade me cook him a dish of them.

DOCTOR. Why did you not refuse?

DONYA ELISA. I did remonstrate.

DOCTOR. Refuse! Refuse! Refuse!

DONYA ELISA. Why, Doctor, I am his wife. I am sworn to obey him.

DOCTOR. Even if he asks you to kill him? Suppose now, he gave you his dagger and asked you to thrust it into his heart. Would you obey him?

DONYA ELISA. (weeping) Why Doctor, you know I would not do it.

DOCTOR. But he asks you to thrust these green peppers into his stomach, - an organ, madam, much more delicate than the heart. You straightway prepare him a huge dish of them. Is it not worse to poison your husband than to stab him?

DONYA ELISA. But oh, Don Enrique, he is so fond of green peppers.

PEDDLER. These are cool, they are fresh, they are crisp. Indeed, I plucked them not an hour ago from the garden. Take one, madam; try one, sir. How they pop in your fingers!

DOCTOR. Off with you, fellow, I say.

DONYA ELISA. Those do look uncommonly fine, Pedrito. (hesitating). If it were not that Don Pancho were just made ill by eating them, I would -

(groans again and cries from within. Pepita and Clotilde rush out. Maria and Jose bring more hot water, flannels, etc).

PEPITA. You go in to him, dear mamma. It is terrible! What if he should die when I was alone with

him! Oh, Don Enrique!

CLOTILDE. I burned him with the hot water. It made him leap almost out of his chair. (leaps).

DONYA ELISA. I will go in and make him ready for your visit. (exit right).

DOCTOR. Well, Pepita, this is sad. And on the day of your betrothal. But cheer up, Don Pancho will be better. We will have him on his feet again before dark. You must prevent him from eating those green peppers. I have absolutely forbidden green peppers.

PEPITA. We love him so Don Enrique, and he loves them.

DOCTOR. There. There. And he loves you still more than green peppers. Is it not so?

PEPITA. I think so, Don Enrique, - I - I think so.

DOCTOR. Of course he does; and therefore, he must not pain you by eating things he should not.

CLOTILDE. It pains him more than it does her. It makes him leap. (leaps).

DOCTOR. I am not sure. - Pepita suffers and keeps silent. And to-day is your betrothal, my little sweetheart. Where is the gay young lover during this turmoil?

PEPITA. I don't know. I had quite forgotten him.

CLOTILDE. We left him here holding two basins. One in each hand. So! (takes attitude of Don Antonio).

PEPITA. Here he comes now and with the Padre. Oh Doctor, will my father die? Oh, save him!

DOCTOR. Nonsense, little girl! Why, how you love him!

(Centre, Don Antonio and the Padre, Francisco Cabeza, a thin, grave man of about thirty years.)

DOCTOR. So this is Don Antonio Figueroa. I am glad to meet you. I hope you are not inclined to be jealous for you first see me with your betrothed in my arms.

DON ANTONIO. Is Donya Elisa here? She sent for the Doctor, but I brought the priest.

CLOTILDE. Oh ho! And if she had sent for the priest, I suppose you would have gone for the Doctor.

DOCTOR. Never mind, Don Antonio. I am the Doc-

tor, and I am always glad to see the Padre, Don Francisco.

EL PADRE. The Doctor is an American and yet he always finds time for compliments.

PEPITA. That is because he is so kind.

CLOTILDE. He has not complimented me this morning.

DOCTOR. You are a good girl, and look like your mother.

PADRE. Is Don Pancho seriously ill? No, he cannot be, or we would not stand thus idling. I understood from our young friend, Don Antonio that he was suffering much torment of the body. There is another anguish, much greater.

CLOTILDE. But it doesn't make you leap. (leaps).

PADRE. Ah the young ones are ever for making laughter. Is Donya Elisa within?

PEPITA. She is with Papa. Will you take a chair, Padre. Here, wait, I will bring a glass of wine. (He sits. She brings wine. Clotilde talks with Antonio. The Doctor sits at the table on the right and opens his medicine case.)

PEPITA. There, Padre, it is the day of my betrothal. Drink to my happiness and, - no, no, drink to the health of Don Pancho. That is my happiness, Only that.

PADRE. You love him more than anyone else?

PEPITA. More than anyone else; and then Donya Elisa.

PADRE. And then whom do you love most after them?

PEPITA. Next?

PADRE. Yes, next.

PEPITA. The good God and His son Jesus and the Holy Mother.

PADRE. No, no, child! Those you love the most of all. But I was speaking of those who dwell upon this earth.

PEPITA. The Holy Mother dwells here in spirit, do you not think so?

PADRE. I hope so. I pray so, daughter, often.

PEPITA. After Papa and Mamma, I love next, - -

Don Enrique.

PADRE. Oh, he is an American. You surely are not so false to your own people.

PEPITA. To me Don Enrique is not an American. He is - he is of the Kingdom of Heaven.

PADRE. But now you are betrothed, you must love Don Antonio, your future husband.

PEPITA. Yes, Padre, but he is a little young, isn't he?

PADRE. And you next must love your Padre, your confessor.

PEPITA. Of course, it is through you I love the Blessed Virgin.

PADRE. Ah, Donya Elisa. Good morning.

(Enter Donya Elisa from right.)

DONYA ELISA. Good morning, Padre. You find us in sad confusion. Ah, Pepita I see has not forgotten you. It is her betrothal day. You must be gracious to her wishes.

PADRE. (kisses Pepita's forehead) Dear daughter, may the Holy Mother guard you.

DONYA ELISA. Have you met my new son, Antonio?

PADRE. He came for me, he stopped me in the street. He said Don Pancho was ill, was dying.

DONYA ELISA. Ah no; it is only the green peppers. He is better now. He is coming out to see the Doctor.

PADRE. I am glad it is nothing serious, Donya Elisa.

DONYA ELISA. That would be sad for my little girl, would it not? But run over, child, and bid Antonio to come to us.

PEPITA. (Crosses to Antonio, who is laughing with Clotilde.) My Mamma bids you to come and speak to the Padre.

ANTONIO. Oh, yes; excuse me; of course; yes, excuse me. (He hurries off to Donya Elisa, but Pepita stays behind with Clotilde.)

DONYA ELISA. Ah, Antonio.

ANTONIO. Pray excuse me, Donya Elisa. I beg your pardon, Padre. I was on the point of coming to you to pay my respects.

(Groans and cries within. 'You great elephant - you

are killing me I tell you. Gently, man, gently. Holy Mother! May the fiends of hell torture you everlastingly! Maria, you are a stupid old idiot. Will you stand by and let your blundering old husband murder me? May the cries of the damned haunt you both forever! Oh! Oh! My - My - My. Elisa! Elisa!' Enter then Don Pancho, being pushed along in a wheeled chair. He is dressed in white pajamas, a towel around his head. Maria attends him with a fan, salts, etc. and Jose pushes the chair slowly. Don Pancho is a fine old Spanish type of the educated and courtly gentleman. He is gracious in his salutes to the company.)
DON PANCHO. Ah, Don Enrique, so you are here to kill me. As if the green peppers could not do it. And Don Francisco de Cadega! I salute you! Forgive me if I do not rise to greet you. I am stricken. You see a dying man before you. But calm yourself. Keep your bottle in your pocket. No sacred oil for rubbing on my lips. If I am dying, - if this rogue of a doctor here does finish me, instead of oil, if you have a little -

PEDDLER. (Who all this time has been standing unmoved.) Green peppers!

DON PANCHO. The words come as from heaven! Though you, sir physician, would accredit them to the other place. Pedrito, you are a good boy, come hither. How is the little lass, your wife now these days? - Juaniata? I used to trot her on my knees. You are jealous now, you beggar. But get out with you. Don't come in and interrupt the conversation of your betters.

PEDDLER. (Holding up a pepper) They are beautiful, sir. They are cool, they are crisp. They were plucked before the dews had left the garden. Break one, sir. How it pops! Will you please to smell it! They are tender, they are sweet, they are sweet as the lips of a girl.

DON PANCHO. They do look nice. But no; I shall not eat any more. Never! Ask the Doctor, there. No. Never, never, never! How is the little wife and the baby? Is your garden all flourishing this season?

One would think so to look at these peppers. They are beauties, - Elisa, will you look at them? Perhaps you should take them to cook for yourselves. There is no reason why you should be deprived of your pleasure because I have this cursed weakness of my body. Come now, Pedro, we will buy them for the mistress. They are fine, they are juicy and savory.

DONYA ELISA. No, I shall not have them in the house.

DON PANCHO. What! Not prepare a dish for Pepita! And to-day is the festival of her betrothal.

PEPITA. Not for me, sir. I never like anything that gives you pain.

DON PANCHO. But also, they give me much pleasure. And Don Antonio will want to taste them I am sure. Antonio, my son, I must have you eat green peppers as they are prepared by your Mamma, Donya Elisa. It is ambrosial; it is the viands of Beulah. First, you pluck them in the morning when the dews are on them and the night air is still cool in their little bodies. These are very good ones, Pedro: you understand them. They have delicate little constitutions, these green peppers. Then give them over into the fair hands of my goddess, Donya Elisa, the Hebe of my kitchen. How is it that you prepare them, my love? Tell Antonio, that he may establish this custom in the foundations of his household.

DONYA ELISA. First I plunge them into a stone jar of salt water.

DON PANCHO. And cool, Antonio, - fresh from the spring in the early morning.

DONYA ELISA. Then an hour or so before the dinner, when I am at leisure -

DON PANCHO. Nothing hurried, you understand, Antonio. They are capricious little ladies. You must humor them; none of your American rush business. Your pardon, Don Enrique. You are really a Spaniard. I have looked up the matter carefully; there is no mistaking it. A Worthington was in Spain in the days of the Great Ferdinand. He came down with the English army as a surgeon. It is undoubted that he married an

Andalusian and their children were the ancestors of your family.

DOCTOR. I have told you that my people came from the island of Nantucket.

DON PANCHE. Precisely! A Spanish sailor came there and settled. The Portuguese did it often, sometimes a Spaniard. He married an American lady, no doubt.

DOCTOR. A fisherman married a lady!

DON PANCHE. My dear Don Enrique, the women of America are all ladies; it is their privilege, their birth-right, their nativity.

DONYA ELISA. Then I take a silver knife, and -

DON PANCHE. Silver, - note the silver, Antonio. No steel or iron shall sully these green jewels.

DONYA ELISA. And I slit them down from the point to the stem, just so. (Takes a pepper and shows.) I cut them in four pieces and then in eight. If they are very large, I cut them into sixteen. These are large, but not very large. At least, all of them are not very large. It is difficult to judge, as you see them in the basket. One must have them in the hand and first in quarters, then in eighths; then the rest is left to judgment.

DON PANCHE. Judgment! It is inspiration, Don Antonio. If it is judgment, it is certainly inspired; you see the point is, the piece of pepper must be of such a size that it goes uncut into the mouth with precisely the right proportion of the gravy. You must not mangle the angels with a fork or spoon at table. As the pepper is cooked, so my dear son it must be eaten.

CLOTILDE. According to that, Godfather, Donya Elisa would have to prepare a separate dish for each individual according to the size of his mouth.

DON PANCHE. For you, my dear, the pieces should be thirty-seconds, but for people in general, an average should be taken. I should say now my mouth is about the average, - a trifle small, perhaps. Eh, Doctor?... You are an observer of anatomies and physiognomies. Or is Don Francisco's mouth perhaps, nearer the average? It is an old saying that a priest's belly is as big

as ten laymen's, - - - but a mouth -

PEPITA. Now, Papa, I love my good Padre more than any one. I will not let you say hard things about him. DON PANCHE. Hear that Antonio. Hark ye! Hear it! Already she loves her padre more than her husband. What will she say when she is the age of Donya Elisa, her Mamma?

DONYA ELISA. When all the peppers are cut, I take a sauce-pan that has been used only for green peppers, and has never been washed with soap. Boiling water, - that will clean a sauce-pan if taken in time. I always make it a rule to cleanse a saucepan immediately I have emptied out the contents.

DON PANCHE. A housewife among a million, my dear Antonio, and the little girl here has been trained to the same method. She will make a famous wife. I have always said it. Train up a child in the ways of thrift and industry, and when she is a woman, she will not depart from them. And a good wife is the prize of all prizes. She is man's servant, his counsellor, his guardian angel. Without her, he is - (A look of alarm spreading over his face, he places his hands over the region of his stomach.) Elisa, they are beginning! They are beginning! Pepita, the hot water, the mustard. Antonio, Clotilde, the ginger. Jose, you whelp of Satan, where are you? Maria, thrust a hot iron into your beast of a husband. Dear Doctor, can't you do something to relieve me? Is this the end of all your boasted learning and medical science? Ai! Jesus! Maria Santissima Madre de Dios, Misericordia! Ai! Ai! (Sees peddler) Pedro, you black rascal, leave the house. Throw your blasted green peppers to the pigs; do you hear me? You are the bringer of all the evil upon me. Away from my sight, you filth of devils! (The peddler retires. Enter then Don Gregorio, Duval, and George Lloyd. Don Gregorio is a tall, handsome man, black beard, piercing eyes, commanding ways. He dresses in black, while everyone else dresses in white or buckskin. Lloyd is a bright-eyed boy from an Eastern college, who has come out west to be a cow-

boy. Don Gregorio walks over to a table on the right, and sits down. Lloyd follows him, looking about the place, with the air of visiting it for the first time. When he sees Pepita, he is much smitten. The confusion is great when they enter, but immediately on seeing them, Don Pancho rises proudly, without a sign of pain on his face, turns with a quiet dignified manner to his household to quiet them, does not look at the visitors, and says to Maria -)

Maria, your duty to your guests.

(He then marches out of the room into the door of the grocery store, left front. He is calm, gracious, but quite formal. The Doctor seats himself at the table, left; the priest remains at a table, centre, with Antonio. Pepita, Clotilde and Donya Elisa retire. The place is a public cafe, at once, no longer the centre of a family gathering.)

MARIA. (To Don Gregorio) Your commands, sir.

DON GREGORIO. (To Lloyd) You shall be first served. You are my guest.

LLOYD. Can a fellow get something to eat here?

DON GREGORIO. The cuisine is excellent. (To Maria) What is there to-day?

MARIA. Frijoles, sir, stewed with herbs aromatic. Chili con Queso, sir, fresh cooked but this morning. Cold pork with a dish of Chili verde.

DON GREGORIO. I recommend the frijoles and chili verde. Donya Elisa is an artist of rare accomplishment.

LLOYD. All right... Bring me some of everything. The names are too much for me to remember. I say but that was a doosid pretty girl. Does she live here? By jiminy! But she has eyes! Are all the Mexican girls like that? This is different from the thing one gets in college.

DON GREGORIO. A daughter, an adopted daughter, of the house. (To Maria) An absinthe... The water cool... Now look sharp. Will you drink anything?

LLOYD. I never do. But aren't you going to eat anything?

DON GREGORIO. I never do. Leave eating to youth. I drink.

LLOYD. (Looking around) I say but this is a stunner of a place! You'd never a thought it to see the outside now, would you?

DON GREGORIO. The Spanish houses are built for those within; not to make a show to the beggars of the street.

LLOYD. This is what you call a patio, I suppose. Do the people live behind these doors? Is that the house?

DON GREGORIO. Within the doors, the people, as you call them live. This has been a somewhat famous old mansion. The owner is poor now. The Yankees sent all this country to the devil. The old gentleman, after having his lands all stolen has been forced to keep a shop like some low tradesman, and his wife must cook for a restaurant. It is a turn of the wheel of fortune. We must bear it.

LLOYD. Was the owner that old swell in the pajamas?

DON GREGORIO. Don Pancho Morales... Popularly known as Green Peppers, from his fatal fondness for the dish that is before you.

LLOYD. (To Maria) Thanks awfully! I say but it smells funny! The beans are queer, too! Oh, I long for a good beef-steak and some fried potatoes. Old United States is the cooking for me. But - Jiminy! That girl is a corker!

DON GREGORIO. I did not know you did cooking in the United States.

LLOYD. You didn't? Well I guess yes! Did you ever eat any pumpkin pie?

DON GREGORIO. Never.

LLOYD. Or mince pie? Or roast turkey with cranberry sauce?

DON GREGORIO. None of them.

LLOYD. Well, until you do, you have never tasted cooking. It's bang up at the top and no use shouting. The girls are pretty, too; but not like this one. They don't give you cold trembles and stop your appetite. Do you think she will come back again?

DON GREGORIO. (Listless, not paying attention. He

has been watching the Doctor all the time, who has ordered a cup of coffee and is drinking it, looking over some letters and papers) Ah. (Rises and goes across to Doctor's table, sits down. Lloyd stares at him, then eats, then sighs.)

DON GREGORIO. (To Doctor.) You are occupied in your thoughts it seems to-day.

DOCTOR. Yes?

DON GREGORIO. You did not speak or bow as I entered.

DOCTOR. Why, I had spoken to you outside a half hour ago.

DON GREGORIO. It is our Spanish custom to speak each time of meeting.

DOCTOR. Well you being a Frenchman, and I being a Yankee, we might dispense with the Spanish custom, might we not?

DON GREGORIO. (His anger rising.) I note an increasing desire on your part to dispense with the customs of civility.

DOCTOR. I assure you, Don Gregorio, I have intended no offence.

DON GREGORIO. (Drawing out his six-shooter, laying it on the table, but near his hand.) I am sure you can mean no offence. If you did I have a little friend here who is very jealous of my honor. (Taps the revolver significantly.)

DOCTOR. Now really, Don Gregorio, you are concerning yourself unnecessarily about this matter. I had no intention of avoiding your company. We gentlemen are too few in this desert to find advantage in avoiding each other. Neither must you hope to frighten me with your little friend there. I too, carry my little friend. (Tapping his medicine case.) And the next time your Malaria is oppressing you, who shall say how this little friend may decide when it comes to prescribing you a physic?

DON GREGORIO. You are a clever fellow, and have your sense of humor. I have not the sense of humor that you have.

DOCTOR. No, you are suffering from a liver. You are bilious. Believe me, Don Gregorgio, if you were to put yourself on a rigid diet, if you were to drink less, smoke less, eat less chili, you would not longer be haunted with these suspicions.

DON GREGORIO. My suspicions have other grounds than chili. You were different toward me a month ago, - quite different.

DOCTOR. I insist I am not, nor have I reason to be different. What could have changed me? What could have come up between us? I have known you since I came here three years ago. You, yourself, told me all the bad things I know about you, as you tell them to everybody when you meet them. To-day I saw you with your friend there. I do not know him. I bowed -

DON GREGORIO. He is a boy... I picked him up in Sante Fe. He is a mother's darling who has just come out of college. He comes from your section. Come and meet him.

DOCTOR. Gladly... But what are you going to do with him?

DON GREGORGIO. I? Nothing... I give him over to you. He bores me. For two days, I was amused with his fresh chatter. Now I find it is endless repetition.

DOCTOR. I will join you. I shall like his appetite, at least. (They rise, and cross right.)

DON GREGORIO. Mr. Lloyd, Dr. Worthington, your countryman. Mr. Lloyd is from Jersey City.

LLOYD. I'm from Princeton.

DOCTOR. Ah, indeed! I'm from Williams, but long ago.

LLOYD. Jiminy!.. I didn't expect to meet so many educated men out here in the wilds of New Mexico. Right here in this little mud village, I find two the first pop. Don't it beat you? Mr. Duval here is a bang-up scholar from Paris, and you are a graduate from Williams. Are you a graduate?

DOCTOR. A. B. '89 at your service.

LLOYD. I am only a sophomore in Princeton. I ran out of eye-sight, lost my health, and came west to be a

cow-boy and make my pile. I thought I'd be lonely out here and the first thing I fell in with two college men. Ain't it funny? And a pretty girl, too! But the food is queer, isn't it? Now say!

DOCTOR. Speaking of educated men, you should meet our host, Senyor Morales. He has degrees from a half dozen universities. Reads French, Italian, German, English poetry and writes not a bad stanza in any of those languages. In Spanish, he is somewhat known, and has published his volumes. I don't pretend to follow half his learning, and even Don Gregorio here, admits he is sometimes worsted.

LLOYD. What, the old bloke in pajamas who keeps the restaurant?

DOCTOR. The same... But we are interrupting your dinner. (To Maria) My cup of coffee, Maria. (She brings it over.) Don Gregorio, a cigarette. (He hands his case to Don Gregorio who takes one and lights it.)

DON GREGORIO. Thanks.

LLOYD. I saw you taking out your pistol. May I see it?

DON GREGORIO. It is not considered good form in this country to ask to see or to show one's shooting irons.

LLOYD. I beg pardon. Excuse me. - I am sure. But you were showing your gun to Dr. Worthington.

DON GREGORIO. A reminder of a little wager that is between us. We have a wager as to which will kill the other first.

LLOYD. Why! Do you do that sort of thing out here? Really kill people, I mean?

DON GREGORIO. Men; not women.

LLOYD. Really I say now, this is the real thing. This is what I have been looking for. I went to Texas but it was as tame, - as tame as Brooklyn. Then I came here, and now I find you. Is it good form to ask if you ever killed a man?

DON GREGORIO. That, neither, is considered good form.

LLOYD. Whew! Now in Texas it's the first thing you ask. But, pshaw! It's only bluff! Now this is dif-

ferent. I have a fine thing, myself in the way of a revolver, but of course if it's not good form to show it, - why -

DON GREGORIO. Show me the muzzle of it sometime, if you don't like my game. Until then, keep the toy in your pocket.

LLOYD. I like you. Can I shake hands before I shoot you? (Offers his hand) It's comfortable to know there'll never be hard feelings.

DON GREGORIO. I am sure we shall both keep the feelings of gentlemen in the matter.

LLOYD. Jiminy, but it must be a good feeling to have killed a man! A sort of self-respect it gives, and *raison d'être*. Did it set you up Dr. Worthington? I mean the first one. I beg pardon. I - excuse my bad form, will you? I am a tenderfoot, and don't understand these little niceties.

DOCTOR. No apology is needed I assure you. In the best circles, it is permissible to joke a Doctor on the number of men he has settled.

LLOYD. Oh, I didn't mean that way. I meant with the gun. I say it must be a curious situation. To shoot a man, not kill him, and then dress up his wounds.

DON GREGORIO. Oh, even here in La Guara, do not understand we are always shooting each other. If we were, there would be nobody left. Now the Doctor and I may sit together for years and drink our coffee and be the best of boon companions. I hope we shall for my part. Don Enrique, here's to a long period of friendship, before I shoot you.

DOCTOR. Thanks! May you never have malaria again until a week before that period arrives. (They drink.)

LLOYD. Jiminy! But you fellows are cool about it, now say!

DOCTOR. In the west, we do a great deal of small talk. It is a different form from that you have in the States.

DON GREGORIO. And as I say, even if the affair comes to guns, there is usually no shooting in the matter. It is western etiquette if a man gets the drop on

you, to put up your hands and do as he wishes. Nor is there any particular disgrace attached to the matter. Why, even here, with our host, old Green Peppers, I once covered him for a walk of thirty miles. Yet I bear him no ill-will about the matter, and he, at least, does not forbid me his hospitality.

LLOYD. What! Don Pancho, who speaks so many languages?

DON GREGORIO. Even he. Education has no armor to keep out bullets.

LLOYD. I'd like awfully to hear about it. I would really, but I beg pardon. I suppose it is not good form.

DON GREGORIO. In this case, I have no objection to telling you of the matter. It was long ago, fourteen years ago; no, - fifteen. Some trouble about his daughter. He thought her insulted.

LLOYD. (Pulling out his revolver, but not pointing it.) I say if it is true that you ever insulted that little girl of his, I will shoot you, and like a dog where I find you. I won't have any man, I don't care who - (shaking his gun.)

DON GREGORIO. (Putting aside the revolver gently.) You are a short-horn, that is evident. You know nothing about these little matters. If you draw your gun, take a bead, do you understand? Don't wave it round your head like a pocket-handkerchief.

LLOYD. I may be a green-horn as you say, but I tell you if you say anything against that little girl -

DON GREGORIO. Pshaw! Did I not tell you this was nearly fifteen years ago. She was fourteen, only to-day, you great big booby. I have my own reasons for protecting the little girl. Of that you will soon learn if you stay in La Guara. But of that another time. I was speaking of Don Pancho and how he, like you, knew nothing of the rules of shooting. (Takes a drink, smokes meditatively a few puffs.) I was coming from Santa Fe across the desert about thirty miles from home. I was still on the trail when I saw a little twinkling light ahead of me. It was like the sun on a

drop of dew I thought. Only, at mid-day there is not any dew in the desert. I watched it. It disappeared. I sat and waited. Then I rode on a few paces, but kept my eyes on the spot. Then I saw it again. It was near the trail. It might be the gleam of a gun-barrel. Some people are so stupid in these matters. I turned my horse out from the trail, skirted a little hill, and came in on a point that would overlook my dew-drop. There lay old Don Pancho on his belly, his rifle pointed out across the trail. I slipped off my horse to get nearer. When I had my bead, I said, 'Get up old man.' I rode into La Guara, but he walked. How he sweat, but not a groan from his old liver! I carried his rifle on his saddle. I have it yet. He knows little about killing. (He sees Lloyd has pushed back his plate.) Have you finished your dinner? Shall we go now? I will show you the rifle, some day, when you come to see me.

LLOYD. I will pay the bill first.

DON GREGORIO. No, no! I have an account here. Maria, the gentleman comes as my guest.

MARIA. Yes, sir.

DON GREGORIO. Are you off now, Doctor, or will you stay?

DOCTOR. I would like a word first with Donya Elisa.

DON GREGORIO. Never miss an opportunity of speaking with a lady. Till we see you again.

DOCTOR. So long. (To Lloyd.) I shall hope to welcome you to my humble lodgings later. I am very glad to have met you. We are lonely out here, and a new friend is a pleasure to us always. Especially, when he is a young friend. We are too old here in New Mexico, too old. (Don Gregorio and Lloyd go out.)

MARIA. Don Pancho wishes you to stay, Don Enrique.

DONYA ELISA. (Enters from right hurriedly.) Maria, you may look now to the dinner. (Exit Maria.) Don Enrique, a word with you, a moment. That man! Did he make any threats? I mean about Pepi-

ta. Oh, I am in such torment. I was afraid he would object to her betrothal. If he speaks, it will kill Don Pancho! It will kill him! And it will kill me and kill Pepita - kill us all! Oh, I am such a miserable wretch, Don Enrique. When I saw him enter, it gave me such a fright, - and Don Pancho! I have never seen him stiffen quite so much. Does he suspect, do you think, Don Enrique? Oh, I am a miserable, miserable woman. I watched you from my window yonder. I saw him take out his pistol and tap it earnestly as he spoke to you. Tell me, are you defending us? Are you? I seem to feel a sword above my head. Every moment I think that it will fall. I am a miserable, wretched woman, Don Enrique.

DOCTOR. Donya Elisa! Calm yourself, dear madame. Don Pancho - Ah, he is coming.

(Enter Don Pancho.)

DON PANCHO. Ah, Don Enrique, I wished you to stay to our festival. (Seeing Donya Elisa.) What Elisa! What is the matter? You are crying?

DONYA ELISA. Don Enrique has been telling me of the illness of little Manuelita. Ah, it is so sad. Poor little thing.

DON PANCHO. (Suspicious, but unwilling to show it.) Yes, it is sad. But is she worse, Doctor?

DOCTOR. Much the same. But it is a case to draw one's pity.

DON PANCHO. Yes. Yes. And pity flows easily from a wounded heart. But it is a day to make merry. Call the children. Pepita, Antonio, Clotilde. Leave off your playthings and your love talk and come hither.

DON ANTONIO. (Coming forward.) I am here, sir. I was talking with the padre.

DONYA ELISA. What? Were you there all the time? Did you hear - (stops.)

PADRE. (Meaningly) Don Antonio was listening to me, Donya Elisa. I was recounting some of the trials of my boyhood.

DONYA ELISA. Ah, Padre, when you speak who can

choose but listen.

(Enter Pepita and Clotilde, hand in hand.)

PEPITA. Did you call, Papa? Has your illness not yet left you?

DON PANCHO. I wanted you child, for our little reunion. How could my illness remain when this is your festival? Come and kiss me, and tell me how much you love me.

PEPITA. Why your hand shakes! I think you are still suffering.

DON PANCHO. I always suffer, little one, when you are not with me.

PEPITA. But I am never going away from you, never. That is the reason I am going to marry Antonio, isn't it? Because he is willing always to stay with you?

DON PANCHO. Nonsense! Is that why little girls marry? You are marrying him child, because you love him. Of course, I love him, too, and am glad that he will always stay with us.

PEPITA. Oh, yes, I love him, of course. So does Clotilde. She loves him more than I do. Look at them now together. And he likes her. It's nice to have one's husband love one's dearest friend, isn't it Papa?

DON PANCHO. Yes, yes, child; I suppose it is; certainly. Your mother was different, I remember.

PEPITA. Who was that handsome white boy that came in with Don Gregorio, P'apa?

DON PANCHO. I do not usually pay much attention to the friends of Don Gregorio Duval.

PEPITA. That was a pity, for this one was very handsome. That is, he was nice looking. He had such pink cheeks. And I think he must have a loving heart.

DON PANCHO. Child, child, what do you know of peoples' hearts?

PEPITA. I know that some are not so black as people think them. Don Gregorio's always shows some white to me.

DON PANCHO. We will not speak of - of the person you mention to-day. When you are married to Anto-

nio, I will ask your mother to tell you why I do not wish you to speak of him. Then you will understand, you will be able to understand. And then of your own accord, you not only will cease speaking of him to me, but you will prevent all others from speaking of him that you can, and you will never allow his name to pass your lips.

PEPITA. There Papa, I will never do so now. I shall not wait till Mamma can tell me. It was wilful of me to speak so to annoy you. But it is I think, because I love you so dearly, that I know how dearly you can love, perhaps, that I want you to love everybody, - everybody, to make them happy, just as you do me.

DON PANCHO. There, little one; there, little one. So you love the old man, do you? Well, well, we will give you a good husband and see you happy. Antonio is a good boy. You will love him.

PEPITA. Why do you want me to marry so quickly? Other girls do not marry so early, do they?

DON PANCHO. It is better when they do. Much better.

PEPITA. Sometimes I think of my real father and mother, as if they were living. I seem to feel them in the world of living beings. They watch me and care for me in secret. I feel their eyes. I feel their prayers, their kisses.

(The Padre, who has been talking with the others, suddenly rises and comes forward, as if drawn irresistibly.)

PADRE. Did you call me, my daughter? I thought I heard you.

PEPITA. No, Padre. I did not mean to call you. I was only talking to Papa.

DON PANCHO. She was making me her father confessor, Don Francisco. Go away now. Don't be jealous. Don't be jealous.

PADRE. I am not jealous of you, Don Pancho, nor of Antonio. I plead pardon for interrupting. I was mistaken. (Retires to the others.)

PEPITA. I think he is like my father who is living. There is such gentleness and protection in his eyes. I

suppose it is because he is everybody's father! His heart is only familiar with father's love. Why do you not go to him in confession, Papa? Mamma goes often and finds great comfort.

DON PANCHO. Your little mouth gives me all the comfort I can ask for.

PEPITA. But that is earthly comfort, - not the comfort of heaven. The two are different. I know them both quite well.

DON PANCHO. Ah little dove with so much wisdom!

PEPITA. The dove is wise. Wiser than the serpent. I think dove's wisdom is the wisdom of the women and the serpent's is wisdom of the men.

DON PANCHO. At all events I must kiss you for your thinking. (Kisses her, holding her face in his hands.) Tell me, do you love your black old Papa?

PEPITA. You are not black. And if you were, I should love you.

DON PANCHO. If I were black as ink, - black as sin, would you love me?

PEPITA. If you were black, sin would be another color; red, perhaps. Some say sin is red.

DON PANCHO. My little dove! I think you really love me.

PEPITA. Do you want me to tell you a secret?

DON PANCHO. Something that you would not even tell when at confession?

PEPITA. I have told at the confession already. But no one else, not even Clotilde knows. That is, if Clotilde knows, I have not told her. That is, I have not told her in words.

DON PANCHO. Well, and what is this secret shared by three? Let me be a fourth to guard its keeping.

PEPITA. If you speak jestingly of it, I shall not tell you. It is a secret that nobody knows but me and I was proposing to tell you as one other.

DON PANCHO. But Don Francisco de Cabeza knows, doesn't he?

PEPITA. Not as Don Francisco, but as the Padre. He represents God and God is not a person.

DON PANCHO. I see. Then there is only Clotilde. And Clotilde doesn't really know.

PEPITA. She knows, but I have not told her. Therefore, she doesn't know in the way I mean. She knows because she has the wisdom of the dove.

DON PANCHO. Now I am satisfied. Whisper now your secret. (Bends his head).

PEPITA. No I shall not whisper it, for then if I get so near I shall only kiss you, and not tell at all. No, I shall speak it out strongly as from principle.

DON PANCHO. Only not too loud because then Antonio might hear.

PEPITA. No; for it is about Antonio.

DON PANCHO. Oho, is it? Then who else is it about?

PEPITA. It's about him and you.

DON PANCHO. I see, and maybe a little bit about you, too.

PEPITA. There I shall not tell you after all. You know already. You are just like Clotilde.

DON PANCHO. The serpent then is not so different from the dove?

PEPITA. The serpent is different. Only the wisdom is the same.

DON PANCHO. Please tell me.

PEPITA. I will not.

DON PANCHO. Please, please.

PEPITA. Never! We will now sir, change the subject. Tell me again of my parents, Are they really dead? Yes, yes, I know they are dead. You have told me so often, but tell me the story again.

DON PANCHO. Your father was a gentleman, a gentleman, and your mother, his wife, was a lady. Of their history there is very little known. They came up from the City of Mexico, and had been in Santa Fe but a week when they were stricken with smallpox and died there. You escaped without contracting the disease. Your father was in Santa Fe on business, and had no relatives or friends in that city. In the haste of their burial at the pest-house, his clothes were burned without any one's learning his address or any of the par-

ticulars of his family. Donya Elisa was in the city visiting her sister; when hearing of your loneliness and friendlessness, she took you up and wrote me asking if she could adopt you. I came on, -

PEPITA. And loved me as soon as you saw me.

DON PANCHO. There now for the hundredth time, you have the story.

PEPITA. And there isn't any cock and bull in it! I'm so glad.

DON PANCHO. Any cock and bull?

PEPITA. But tell me was my mother's name Estella?

DON PANCHO. (much moved) Hush child. Where did you hear such a name? There is no such a name in all the saints' days. It is impossible that any one could have such a name. Your mother's name was Catalina. Catalina Rodriguez, and your father's name was Gabriel, Don Gabriel. (growing more excited) Cock and bull! Cock and bull! Elisa! Cock and bull! Elisa! Come here!

PEPITA. Oh, Papa, it was nothing. It was nothing. Some gossip Clotilde overheard.

DON PANCHO. Who is gossiping? What did Clotilde overhear?

PEPITA. Merely Maria and Anna in the kitchen. It was nothing, dear Papa, it was nothing. (Goes to stroke his cheek.)

DON PANCHO. Keep off your hands. Don't touch me. Elisa!

PEPITA. Papa!

DONYA ELISA. (Running forward, much frightened, the others following.) Pancho, what is it? Are you ill again?

DON PANCHO. Woman, on your knees. I want your oath. Quick on your knees. I say down!

DONYA ELISA. (Kneeling at his feet.) Pancho, what is it? What is it?

DON PANCHO. Swear to me that it is true what you have often told me, the story of Pepita's parents in Santa Fe. Swear it before these friends assembled and your priest. Swear as you believe in God and hope for

Heaven.

DONYA ELISA. (Weeping) It is true all I have told you Pancho. Ai! Don't kill me.

DON PANCHO. Swear, on your oath.

DONYA ELISA. On my oath, I swear.

DON PANCHO. What do you swear?

DONYA ELISA. That all I have told you is true. Ai Dios!

DON PANCHO. Repeat after me, 'I Elisa, as I believe in God, as I hope for Heaven, swear' -

DONYA ELISA. I, Elisa, as I believe in God, as I hope for Heaven, swear.

DON PANCHO. 'That all that I have told my husband concerning the parents of the child Pepita is true' -

DONYA ELISA. That all that I have told my husband concerning the parents of the child Pepita is true.

DON PANCHO. 'That their names were Gabriel and Catalina Rodriguez'

DONYA ELISA. That their names were Gabriel and Catalina Rodriguez -

DON PANCHO. 'That they died in the pest-house of Santa Fe' -

DONYA ELISA. That they died in the pest-house of Santa Fe -

DON PANCHO. 'That I know no more than this concerning them' -

DONYA ELISA. That I know no more than this concerning them.

DON PANCHO. 'That if I have ever spoken aught to the contrary either to the Doctor or the father confessor, it was false, wicked and wilful lies' -

PADRE. (Trying to interfere) Don Pancho -

DON PANCHO. Back, you black robe of Satan. Elisa, repeat!

DONYA ELISA. I did say it. I have forgotten it. Oh, Pancho, you kill me.

DON PANCHO. Repeat!

DONYA ELISA. I forget. I forget.

DON PANCHO. 'That if I have ever spoken aught to the contrary, either to the Doctor, or to the father con-

fessor, it was false, wicked and wilful lies'

DONYA ELISA. That if I have ever spoken aught to the contrary, either to the Doctor - (hesitates)

DON PANCHO. Or to the father confessor in confession -
DONYA ELISA. Or to the father confessor in confession -

DON PANCHO. 'It was false, wicked and wilful lies' -

DONYA ELISA. It was false, wicked and wilful lies.

DON PANCHO. 'So help me God.'

DONYA ELISA. So help me God.

DON PANCHO. 'Amen.'

DONYA ELISA. Amen.

DON PANCHO. (After a silence, his face calming, resuming his former gracious manner.) Friends, let us sit down to our feast. It is to celebrate the betrothal of our beloved daughter. Jose, Maria, bring wine. Elisa, be so kind as to order dinner. Antonio, my son.

PEPITA. Papa, papa, kiss me. (runs to him).

DON PANCHO. The - the - time for that will come later on.

PEPITA. Kiss me now. Kiss me now.

DON PANCHO. (First hesitates, then is about to yield, breaking into sobs. Then he controls himself, puts her away firmly.) Not yet; in due time. Antonio, my son, it gives me great pleasure to say to you that although to-day I give you the hand of my adopted daughter, that I can affirm that she is a lady without stain upon her name, that her parents were gentle people, bound in wedlock. (He looks at Pepita's eyes, quails, but with strong effort, regains control.) Friends, gentlemen, to the table, to the festival. Let good cheer be the guest of every heart.

(They seat themselves at the table that has been prepared back centre, and are being served, when Lloyd enters).

LLOYD. I beg pardon; I seem to be interrupting.

DON PANCHO. You are... It is the festival of my daughter's betrothal.

PEPITA. No, no Papa. It is my feast, and even a beggar shall be welcome. Much more a stranger and a

gentleman.

LLOYD. I beg pardon.

PEPITA. You shall not go. I will not have it. This is your house, sir. What are your orders?

(All are stupefied at her daring. Even Don Pancho is check-mated. Enter then Don Gregorio in a passion, comes forward, glances around, sees Lloyd, the Doctor and all, sits down to a table, right front, and orders.)

DON GREGORIO. Waiter, bring wine.

DON PANCHO. (To Don Gregorio.) Sir, we are assembled at a festival; will you be good enough to leave the house to us? It is a family affair. I beg you will excuse us.

DON GREGORIO. Oh-ho, a family affair, is it? May I ask what is the occasion?

DON PANCHO. It is the betrothal of our daughter Pepita.

DON GREGORIO. In that case, who should be here more than I? At what time is it more fitting that her father -

DONYA ELISA. Don Gregorio!

DON PANCHO. Sir!

DON GREGORIO. She is my daughter as the whole village knows. You alone have eyes for blindness, when you will not see. Ask the Doctor, ask the Padre, ask her Grandmother. She is my daughter, and your daughter is her mother, Estella.

DON PANCHO. Sir, leave this house!

DON GREGORIO. On the contrary, I shall stay as long as I choose. Waiter, wine!

DON PANCHO. Jose, go for the Mayor, immediately.

DON GREGORIO. Yes, Jose, run for the Mayor. He will tell you that I have as good a right here as any. This is not a private house, but a public restaurant. The Mayor, himself has issued you the license. Turn me out old Green Peppers. I should like to see you. Maria, bring more wine. I drink to my -

DON PANCHO. Jose! Stop!

JOSE. Your orders, sir.

DON PANCHO. Bring fire from the kitchen. Burn the house! Maria, there is petroleum in the store. Turn it over the floors and on the woodwork.

JOSE. Sir!

DON PANCHO. Do as I bid you.

DONYA ELISA. Pancho!

DOCTOR. Surely, Don Pancho, you are not in earnest. You will burn the house over our heads!

DON PANCHO. This house has been disgraced. I have disgraced it. I have taken the home inherited from my ancestors, and have sold it for the bauble of a living. I was not proud enough or strong enough to starve. I have pawned my heritage. I have made it a common tavern. Let it burn! (Enter Jose with fire.) Jose, do as I have bid you. (Jose runs into shop; fire gleams through windows, sparkles, burns; women scream.) Now friends, let us drink a glass together. To our fathers, and may they feel the joy of vengeance!

(Fire burns up.)

(Curtain)

ACT II

Scene: The interior of an old Spanish mission church looking down the nave toward the altar. The place is weather-worn, the plaster streaked and stained. Faint lights are burning before some of the images, otherwise the place is in darkness. The time is ten o' clock in the evening of the same day as Act I. A moment after the curtain rises, Don Gregorio enters with a lantern and a basket. He wears a long black cloak and might easily be mistaken for the priest.

DON GREGORIO. (Addressing the church.) Well, old ship, I still feel at home on your deck. If it had not been for that meddlesome old Don Pancho, I might yet be under my own roof, instead of coming in like a burglar. Now his roof is down about his ears. What a fiery old pepper he is anyway. For all he is my enemy, and I fight him, I confess I rather like the old fellow. After all, he didn't do me such a bad turn in getting me turned out of the church. I am freer than I was, much freer. I have my time, my individuality, my character and the snug little pile of silver in the crypt here. I shall tap it presently. There is no hurry. I have the place to myself to-night. All the village is gathered around its burning hacienda. A fire will draw a crowd, or a murder. An act of virtue, the building of a temple, a few stragglers may idle about it curiously. As for me, I have seen houses burn before. Also, I have seen men murdered. Well, to business. (He takes a bar from under his cloak, pries up one of the stones of the pavement, slips it aside, sits down on the edge about to jump down, when a glance up the church recalls his memories.) An excommunicated

priest who stole the church plate and still has a part of it hidden! That little silver, what is it? I am not excommunicate, nor can be. I defy Rome. I defy old Green Peppers. Wait! (He sets down his lantern and runs down the nave, back, then he goes out into the vestry, right back, and enters again, arraying himself in the robes of the priest. He starts toward the altar, as though beginning the ceremony of the Mass.) Ha! Old Green Peppers, your roof is tumbling about your ears. Mine still casts protecting shadow. (A noise outside, he runs forward, wearing the robes, and covers up his lantern.) Now what is this business interrupting? (A noise of unlocking the door, he jumps down into the trap, and lowers door over his head. Enter then the Padre, the Doctor, and Don Pancho. The Padre and the Doctor are almost dragging the old man in who is much excited and half crazed with grief.)

DON PANCHO. In the Devil's name, what do I in a church? I see little priestling, you would mock me. A priest makes a harlot of my daughter; a priest is the father of my baby. So you bring me to the church to give me shelter, Perhaps you will tell me now my mother was a strumpet, and that I have a priest to thank for my existence. Your boast that the church is the mother of us all is a little muddled. You should say the father. You mistake the sex. Don Enrique, I thought better of you than to bring me here. Your father was not a priest in America, was he?

DOCTOR. You refuse to enter my rooms or any of the houses of your neighbors.

DON PANCHO. You had that - that bastard in there. You know you did.

DOCTOR. Pepita?

DON PANCHO. Ay, Pepita, Anita, Clotildita, Juanita, Ninyita. All of the itas. They are bastards all. Their fathers are priests. I suppose Don Francisco, your confessional -

PADRE. (Interrupting) In Heaven's name, cease your blasphemy.

DON PANCHO. Hoity-toity! What virtue all of a sudden. I suppose you think the saints up there will warm with blushes. Now you are a priest, you must put on a mask of piety like them all. It was not so when you were a young student. I remember now you were like the rest of the young men, ogling around that thing I called my daughter.

PADRE. In Holy Mary's name.

DON PANCHO. From the day I knew, her name has not crossed my lips. Nor have my ears allowed its entrance at their portals. That little thing, my baby, spoke it to-day. Had it been put into her mouth by Donya Elisa, or was it the sin, the lust, the crime that fires her blood? My baby, what a fool I was to say it. A bastard like them all. I hate all babies.

DOCTOR. You are violent; calm yourself, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. Ay, I am violent. I am weak. I am an old man, Don Enrique, in my prattling, second childhood. A priest has begotten that as he does the first ones. It has aged me, this blow, my strength all trembles. Time was when I was strong and knew my birthright. When my daughter sinned, I cast her off and stood alone. To-night, I have been doddering out her name. The other's name, too, I have mentioned. In the morning, I shall be stronger, you shall see. I will call my wife and walk into the desert. The house is down. I have not that to tempt me. I will go up to the mountains among the Indians. There are caves there. The wild beasts shall be my guests. They know kings there; but they have no priests, nor churches.

PADRE. Come within. I will prepare a bed for you to rest.

DON PANCHO. So you have a bed here, do you? No priest's bed for me. It is perhaps the one Don Gregorio left you. Or did he take beds as well as dishes and wardrobe? Don Gregorio now was a thief among thieves. A priest of priests, you may call him; for not contented with robbing everyone else, he must needs rob himself and his own house. He stole his

own dishes, he stole his own wives; he finally stole his own house and his position. As I did mine in another way. But he lives and flourishes, curse him, curse him! Oh to think he should come into my house. Mine! And I endure him, and my wife plead for him, plead for him. Oh I know why she harbored him. Defended him... She was in the power of his secret. Her secret... Secret! It was known throughout the village. It has been the servants' gossip here for years. Don Enrique, you knew it. Deny it not. Don't you stand there, and lie into my teeth.

DOCTOR. Why should I lie to you now, Don Pancho, when I can save you no pain by so doing? I have known since the first week of my coming to La Guara. Don Gregorio himself told me some three years ago.

DON PANCHO. And you have pretended to be my friend! Oh you traitor! You snake in the grass! You are all snakes! Francisco, you too, you did not tell me.

PADRE. I did not; I mean, - it might not have been true. It was Don Gregorio's word I had merely. We all know he is a liar, as well as a thief. We all know he has been thrust from the bosom of the church.

DON PANCHO. Oh this church, church, church. It always gets into the conversation for a man to stumble over. You say you did not know Pepita was my daughter's child? Did not my wife tell you when she brought her here? Oh that story of the pest-house and the Rodriguez!

PADRE. That I knew. But I was speaking of Don Gregorio. That he is the - -

DON PANCHO. Oh, that, everybody knows, down to the boys in the street. Even I know that, old blind fool that I am. Oh, pish, pish Francisco, you are weak in your arguments.

DOCTOR. Come, come, Don Pancho. You must take a little rest. It is late; we are all tired. Come, go to bed.

DON PANCHO. Man, look at me. Do I look as if I could rest? Put a man on the rack. Your dear church

has a rack, has it not Francisco? Strap his hands and his feet to the frames, and then clutch your barbed hooks into his heart; then turn the wheel: turn, you damned priest, Don Gregorio. Then, you, Doctor, come and bid me to rest. By the fiends of Hell, I will cry out my agonies. Rave? Yes, I rave. Would you not rave in my place? Oh, I loved that little girl, that baby. At first, not. It was Elisa who loved her then. But as she grew, - as she climbed about my knees, - her little voice babbling like a rivulet! Once, she fell ill. You were here, Enrique. You saved her life. Why did you not kill her?

DOCTOR. I wish I had killed her father. I now wish it.

PADRE. He is accursed! There is no power to kill him. Except the one that waits on him above.

(Enter Jose with blankets).

JOSE. Donya Elisa sends you this blanket, sir, and asks if you are comfortable.

DON PANCHO. Oh, yes, I am comfortable, thanks to the bed she has prepared for me. Take the blanket up to the altar there, and burn it.

DOCTOR. I object. That is my blanket. I recognize it. Donya Elisa has taken it from the bed I gave her.

DON PANCHO. Then Jose, take the blanket back to Donya Elisa. No, stay a minute. Why go to those women? Come here, Jose. I want a promise from you.

JOSE. I am your slave, sir. I will die to serve your bidding.

DON PANCHO. It is not death I ask. It is free living. Listen. You have a wife, Jose.

JOSE. Maria, sir; you blessed us at the marriage.

DON PANCHO. I did wrong. It was a curse that I put on you.

JOSE. Sir!

DON PANCHO. You must give her up, Jose. All women are false and vile.

JOSE. Maria has been a true wife to me.

DON PANCHO. You think so but some day you will find out she has been juggling with Don Gregorio or

some priest here. Don Francisco de Cabeza is a sly youth.

JOSE. Sir!

DON PANCHO. Give her up before you suffer as I suffer. Henceforth we will walk alone like Don Enrique. By Jove, the doctors and the priests know the women. Come, Jose, I want you to swear.

JOSE. Swear? Sir?

DON PANCHO. Swear to give up your wife. To never see her again. Henceforth, let her name not pass your lips.

JOSE. If you command it, Don Pancho, I know no other law than to obey. I came to you a young man, you remember, in the happy days when you and Donya Elisa -

DON PANCHO. Tush! Tush! Do you not understand that you must not mention Donya Elisa's name to me any more.

JOSE. Not mention the name of Donya Elisa? Why I might as easily omit the Holy Virgin from my prayers.

DON PANCHO. That's it, The Holy Virgin!

PADRE. Sir: this is God's house. Your blasphemy shall cease, Not even the craze of grief shall give you leave to say one word against the Holy Virgin's name.

DON PANCHO. What, Pancho! Are you such a valiant little man? Well, well, no doubt you are right. I am a guest in this your house of God. And be he what he may, 'tis not for me to show myself so churlish and ill-bred. Forgive me Don Francisco.

PADRE. (Kneeling.) Forgive me, father. I am he who sins. I came a youth into your household's charm. and you were like father unto me. You were so noble, generous and brave, and in those days took not the name of God in wicked blasphemy, as you take it now.

DON PANCHO. I had faith, then. Or, if not having faith, I still had patience with the gods of men. My heart has been sore tried. Forgive me Pancho.

PADRE. Oh sir, though men may sin, though priests may walk by day with hearts as black as night with sin-scorched shame, can you not see God's wings are

still outspread, white as the dawn, pure as the cloudless sky?

DON PANCHO. I know no god beyond the make of priests. Let me alone now there, Come, Jose, did you swear?

JOSE. To give up Maria, sir?

DON PANCHO. To give up all women, Maria first of all.

JOSE. I have already sworn to give up all the others. That was my marriage vow.

DON PANCHO. Then come swear to give up her, as I now do with Donya Elisa. Come, we will swear together. Repeat the words with me.

JOSE. I have always done as you bade me sir, but, but, don't you think we ought to talk this over first with them? Donya Elisa and Maria might not like it.

DON PANCHO. With me now. We two, Francisco Morales and Jose Moreno, master and servant do hereby swear on our sacred word of honor.

JOSE. Oh, I'll swear on my word of honor to anything you like.

DON PANCHO. That we will henceforth have no communication with our wives Elisa and Maria, respectively. Neither will we speak their names, nor admit to our own thoughts that they ever had any existence for us. But we will - (seized with a pain of indigestion) But we will - Doctor, that old indigestion, again. Haven't you any of those tablets about you?

DOCTOR. My medicine chest was left in your house. It is burned with the other things. I am sorry.

DON PANCHO. Sorry! Sorry! Is that all you are? Do you mean to say there are no more in your office?

DOCTOR. I can send a prescription to the druggist. Jose could wake him up. He lives near by.

DON PANCHO. Jose wake him! Wake the saints on Day of Judgment! I would be dead before he got his prescription. I want the tablets now, - now, - now!

DOCTOR. I will write at once. (Takes out book.)

DON PANCHO. No, no, I am in a hurry I tell you. Look here, Jose, run to Donya Elisa. Tell her to give you those tablets. She always carries a bottle in her

pocket. Tell her I am suffering, suffering. Stop a minute. Tell her to come along, to bring Maria. Those women know more in a minute, than your doctors in a day, when one's in trouble. Run, Jose; hurry. Oh -Ai Dios! Holy Mary have some pity!

(Enter Donya Elisa, Maria and Jose.)

DONYA ELISA. I was waiting outside, Good Padre. Lead us to the next room, Don Enrique. Give an arm to help Don Pancho. Maria, prepare the draught. Jose, hot water. You can get it of Donya Linda. She is up. Come Pancho, don't be a fool.

(She leads the party out left, Don Pancho groaning terribly. As soon as all are gone, Don Gregorio cautiously lifts the trap, and peers out. He is emerging, still in his robes, when Jose, returning with hot water, sees him, shrieks and runs back. Don Gregorio smiles, steps out, replaces trap, goes up to the altar, enters the sacristy taking off his robes. He is returning when he hears people coming and steps back into shadow. Enter Lloyd dragging Jose.)

LLOYD. Come on; show me where it is. I will report it to the Society for Psychical Research. A church ghost would be a find. Now, where was it?

JOSE. Oh Holy Mother protect me! Sainted Mary shield me. Oh - o ! Oh - o !

LLOYD. I say, will you come out of that trance? (Shaking him) Where did you see that ghost? Where was it?

JOSE. (Pointing.) There. Oh Holy Virgin, have mercy.

LLOYD. Where? Here? Show me precisely the spot.

JOSE. It came up out of the floor. Oh Holy Mary.

LLOYD. Stop that gibberish. Where did it come up? Here?

JOSE. Oh don't take me so near. It will drag us down. Oh murder! Help! Murder! Fire! Help!

LLOYD. (Seeing the trap which has not been well replaced, releases Jose, who runs within, left. Lloyd examines the stone, lifts on it, finally shoves it aside, and peers down.) Another disappointment. A bona

fide ghost would go through the stone. I'll strike a light. (He presses button of a pocket electric lantern.) Something in a bag. Maybe bones. (He leaps down, and immediately re-appears with a bag which he empties on the floor. It contains church plate, tankards, cups, etc.) Only dishes! What curious old things!

(Don Gregorio, meanwhile, has stealthily come forward covering Lloyd with a six shooter.)

DON GREGORIO. So this is your business in La Guara. You are not such an innocent as you seemed.

LLOYD. Excuse me. You do it so cleverly. Now my gun is still in my pocket.

DON GREGORIO. Put the things back into the bag.

LLOYD. Are they yours, that you make so free to give orders?

DON GREGORIO. It is the church plate, stolen, as you know, some months ago. Fortunately, I have chanced upon the robber.

LLOYD. Oh - o - e! (Whistles.) Now, I put two and two together, I find it makes four. This is the plate that was stolen ten years ago by you who were then the priest in this church, and for which theft you were excommunicated. So this is the place you kept it in hiding. And you were the ghost Jose saw.

DON GREGORIO. What brainlessness are you going through now?

LLOYD. Your friend the Doctor told me the story.

DON GREGORIO. Take up that bag and come with me.

LLOYD. No. We'll settle this little matter here.

DON GREGORIO. You forget I have my aim straight at your head.

LLOYD. No: only I remember that it would not be practical for you to pull the trigger. There is a crowd inside and more would gather outside in a minute. It is well-known that you stole the plate.

DON GREGORIO. I give you a minute to decide on doing as I tell you or meeting death.

LLOYD. I prefer to employ that minute in arguing the case. Look here. Don Gregorio, why can't we compromise? You can keep your plate and your secret.

I'm not one to stir up a row, but on the other hand, you can do something for me. It won't cost you much trouble and it will help me. Come; do you listen? Are you interested?

DON GREGORIO. What do you want?

LLOYD. I'm stuck on that little girl, Pepita. Jiminy! It makes my heart jump when I think of her name. Now I don't like the idea of you for a father-in-law. Don't feel offended. I hope we shall always be friends. It's only that I don't want to take you into the family.

DON GREGORIO. Well.

LLOYD. Now that's noble. You take it like a philosopher. I admire you Don Gregorio. I do truly.

DON GREGORIO. To the point.

LLOYD. Take back that story you told to-night, about your being her father. Pretend you did it only to frighten the old gentleman. You will enjoy your revenge all right in making him think that he has burnt down his house all for nothing. You have the kind of mind to appreciate that joke.

DON GREGORIO. It is impossible. The story has been accepted in the village here for years.

LLOYD. But who started it? Surely not the woman, old Don Pancho's daughter.

DON GREGORIO. I admit I started the story.

LLOYD. And told Donya Elisa and all. I know you told the Doctor and all strangers.

DON GREGORIO. Yes, I told everybody. The girl Estella has never been heard of since the affair was discovered.

LLOYD. Good! Well, now you can publicly deny it. You can say you made the whole thing up to get even with old Don Pancho for a grudge you bore him. Now you are even. You can tell.

DON GREGORIO. And if I do, you'll keep quiet about this.

LLOYD. Quiet! As quiet as the grave. Don't you see I'll have it to my interest. For although you do swear you are not my father-in-law, I will still know you are, and feel a bit delicate on the subject. Un-

derstand?

DON GREGORIO. Of course my swearing to the contrary does not alter the fact.

LLOYD. In my mind it rather establishes it. It's the world I want to fool - and the girl. Poor little heart-broken-bird. She thinks she is the daughter of her grandpa's greatest enemy.

DON GREGORIO. I will humor you. All right. I like the notion. You are a bright boy and brave. I will not mind having you for a son-in-law, though in secret. As you say old Green Peppers will squirm when he learns he has burned his house for nothing.

LLOYD. It's a bargain then! Shake! It's a bargain.

DON GREGORIO. I agree. As you say. It is a bargain.

(Enter Pepita, Antonio and Clotilde. Pepita seeing Lloyd, runs up to him, seizes his hand.)

PEPITA. Oh sir, is he better? Is he better?

LLOYD. Oh much better. Much better; quite well now. Indeed we may say he is quite recovered.

PEPITA. Where is he? In the sacristy? Is he sleeping?

LLOYD. In the sacristy. Oh I guess so. He is sleeping. But you'd better stay with me; you might wake him.

CLOTILDE. Why here's Don Gregorio Duval, and what are all the pretty dishes? Oh look!

LLOYD. A bag of old junk I bought of the rag-man. I was showing it to Don Gregorio. He's a connoisseur.

CLOTILDE. But it's silver and gold, and oh, isn't it pretty?

LLOYD. You shall look at it to-morrow, Senorita. (Dumps things into the bag.)

(Enter Jose left.) Jose, carry this to my lodgings. Don Gregorio, if you will wait there, I will follow.

(Jose takes the bag. Don Gregorio follows him out, bowing to all.)

PEPITA. Why, how does Jose know where your lodgings are?

LLOYD. Everybody knows. Don Gregorio will show him.

PEPITA. But perhaps Papa had sent him out for something.

LLOYD. Papa?

PEPITA. I have always been taught to call him Papa. They say now he is my grand papa.

LLOYD. Oh, Don Pancho. By the way, where is Don Pancho?

PEPITA. Why you said yourself he was in the sacristy.

LLOYD. Oh, he is the one who is in the sacristy! I knew it was somebody, anyway.

PEPITA. But, you said he was better, - had recovered.

LLOYD. Why so he is; so he has; at least, he will be when he sees you.

PEPITA. Oh Mr. -

LLOYD. My name is Lloyd. You can call me George.

PEPITA. Don Jorge is a very pretty name.

LLOYD. It is pretty in your lingo, now, isn't it?

PEPITA. It is very wrong of me to speak with you here. Antonio and Clotilde seem to have left us.

LLOYD. Oh they are finding something interesting to talk about.

PEPITA. I am glad Antonio likes Clotilde best.

LLOYD. Aren't you jealous when he's engaged to you?

PEPITA. Oh, he can never marry me now.

LLOYD. He can't? Jiminy! But that's news.

PEPITA. He can bring only an honorable name into his family.

LLOYD. (Confused) But if he should find out, that after all, - ah, ahem, that - that Don Gregorio was not after all your father.

PEPITA. Isn't he? Was it a lie? I knew it. Oh, but Mamma couldn't have been mistaken.

LLOYD. I suppose Mr. Antonio will be wanting you back if he finds out. If he finds out.

PEPITA. Oh, I am so unhappy. So unhappy.

LLOYD. Now don't be. I mean let me comfort you. There cry. Now Jiminy! Crying is nicer than laughing, sometimes, isn't it? There, there! Here's my handkerchief; yours is all black. There now, my lit-

tle jinksy, winksy, minxy.

PEPITA. I haven't any father. I haven't any father!

LLOYD. Be thankful and glad for it I tell you. It's a blessing that is accorded to but few. My governor has given me lots of trouble. And I've been patient with him, and forbearing, I have really.

PEPITA. Nobody will ever marry me. Never!

LLOYD. Won't they? Take me. Oh Jiminy! I say, will you marry me? Will you?

PEPITA. I can't. I have no Papa to give me away.

LLOYD. Oh, we'll get the Doctor, Don Enrique.

PEPITA. No, it must be a real Papa.

LLOYD. I'll tell you. I'll steal you. We'll elope.

PEPITA. You are a Protestant. I must marry only a Catholic.

LLOYD. I'll change. I'll declare my intentions now. Where's the priest? Do you think he carries papers about with him?

PEPITA. Oh dear, I must ask Mamma about it.

LLOYD. Mamma?

PEPITA. Donya Elisa says she will always be my Mamma.

LLOYD. But if she says yes, will you? Will you? Will you?

PEPITA. I shall do as she tells me. I always do.

LLOYD. I can fix her. I can fix her. Oh Jiminy!

PEPITA. Who is Jiminy? You are always speaking of her.

LLOYD. Why, maybe it's my sweetheart. Who knows?

PEPITA. Oh, so you have a sweetheart, already?

LLOYD. A fresh one; just out. Yes, yes!

PEPITA. I thought, - I understood, - What is her name?

LLOYD. Her name? Why Pepita. Tag! You're it!

PEPITA. But you said her name was Jiminy.

LLOYD. I was joking; it isn't. It's Pepita. That's a word I say when I'm sort of hugging myself.

PEPITA. Why do you hug yourself?

LLOYD. Why, of course. Why do I? I won't. I'll

hug you. Oh, Jiminy!

PEPITA. It's a nice word, Jiminy, isn't it? You'll say it now when you - - Oh I never talked to a man this way before. Take me to Donya Elisa, take me, take me. (She runs back toward the left, but at the sacristy door encounters Donya Elisa coming out).

DONYA ELISA. Why, Pepita, child, what are you doing here, waiting at his door? Oh, he won't see you, my poor little orphan, my baby. And there's Antonio and Clotilde and - (Seeing Lloyd) I beg your pardon.

LLOYD. Can I be of any service to you, madam?

DONYA ELISA. Oh, I remember, you are the friend of Don Gregorio.

LLOYD. I trust that will not prevent me from being your friend. I come with very important news from Don Gregorio.

DONYA ELISA. Yes, excuse me. I was looking for Jose. It is twice now I have sent him for hot water. Antonio, you go and see what is the matter with him, will you? I sent him to Donya Linda. Wait, you do not know the way. Pepita, child, you and Clotilde go with him. And perhaps Donya Linda will accompany you back. Under no other circumstances, would I let you go unattended. But Antonio is a good boy, and alas, who can keep up appearances on such a night as this? (Exit Antonio, Clotilde, Pepita.) Now sir, you have a message from Don Gregorio. Alas the day that I ever listened to his messages!

LLOYD. He desires me to tell you that all he said in your house this evening about, - your grand-daughter was false. That he has no claim whatever upon Pepita. That he connected his name long ago with the stories of your daughter, because he wished to annoy Don Pancho, your husband, against whom he had some slight grievance or other. That, afterward, upon your adoption of Pepita, he kept up the pretence, because it gave him power over you, as well as over Don Pancho.

DONYA ELISA. Maria, Holy mother, take my thanks. (Kneels and begins sobbing and praying).

LLOYD. (Aside) It was the biggest lie I ever attempt-

ed, but it's worth the effort, and Jiminy, I like it. Henceforward I shall never tell the truth. It's time to swear off anyway if I'm going to be married.

DONYA ELISA. Is it true? Is it true what you are telling me?

LLOYD. I swear to it madam. I take my oath. Have you got a Bible handy? I'll bring Don Gregorio here myself, now if you like, in this church, and he'll swear before the priest and the doctor.

DONYA ELISA. But why does he tell now, as he never saw fit to do so before?

LLOYD. Don't you see? He considers he's had his revenge. Don Pancho's house is burned, he is reduced now to penury.

DONYA ELISA. It is true we are beggars: we are beggars.

LLOYD. Dear madam, will you listen to me a moment: I am, - I mean, - I have, - ahem, a little money. I mean a few hundred thousands.

DONYA ELISA. We could never accept charity from a stranger.

LLOYD. That's it. I don't want to be a stranger. I love your grand-daughter, Pepita. I wish to marry her. I am inclined to think she may return my affection.

DONYA ELISA. Do you mean to say you have spoken to her, already?

You have seen her alone - you have taken advantage of this calamity?

LLOYD. It was in a church, madam. Antonio and Clotilde were making love, too.

DONYA ELISA. Oh, my orphan, my lamb, my innocent little baby. She is ruined. She is disgraced and lost forever.

LLOYD. Why I didn't even so much as kiss her. I never touched her. I addressed her quite formally, I assure you. Indeed, she received me in the same haughty manner and was going to find you, when you met her at the door way. (Aside) Jiminy, but it's fine to lie. I feel famous.

DONYA ELISA. But you saw her alone - you spoke to her. She is lost. She is disgraced in the eyes of the world now forever.

LLOYD. But if you let me marry her, madam, as my wife -

DONYA ELISA. That cannot be. You are a Protestant, in the first place.

LLOYD. I can change my religion, easily, ma'am. I never had much.

DONYA ELISA. It would be something to gain a convert to the True Church, but no, it cannot be. It can not be. She has no parents.

LLOYD. A recommendation for any bride I assure you.

DONYA ELISA. No; she must go into a convent. I am decided. But I thank you Don -

LLOYD. George.

DONYA ELISA. Don Jorge, I trust you.

LLOYD. I say, you won't let that little Antonio have her, will you?

DONYA ELISA. Don Antonio is of worthy birth and station.

LLOYD. You mean that he can never marry Pepita?

DONYA ELISA. Not that, now her parentage is known.

LLOYD. Well I give you notice, I do not intend to give her up. I shall speak to Don Pancho about the matter.

DONYA ELISA. Don Pancho will not so much as hear her name spoken. He has cast her off, as he cast off her mother. I am an unhappy woman, Don Jorge. Ai me, that a stranger should see my tears.

LLOYD. I am not a stranger, and I mean to be your son.

DONYA ELISA. Pepita must go into a convent.

LLOYD. But tell me, if I can bring Don Pancho around to taking her back, to accepting her once more as his daughter, why then, will you consent to let me have her? Will you use your influence with Don Pancho in my favor?

DONYA ELISA. You speak of the impossible. It can

not be. You do not know the iron pride of Don Pancho.

LLOYD. But you'll be on my side? Won't you - Mama?

DONYA ELISA. You are a good boy. But ours is a ruined family.

LLOYD. In our country we like ruins. They are so picturesque.

DONYA ELISA. I could never let my darling go so far.

LLOYD. But I mean to settle here in New Mexico. I shall start a big ranch and buy cattle. You and Don Pancho will come with us to live. Eh?

DONYA ELISA. You are a boy. You do not understand a man. You are an American. You do not understand the Spaniard.

LLOYD. I understand love.

DONYA ELISA. Ah, love.

LLOYD. Love rules the world.

DONYA ELISA. Love crushes the world. It breaks its heart. It kills it. (Weeping.)

(Enter Don Pancho).

DON PANCHO. Elisa. (Seeing Lloyd) Sir, I have had the honor before this evening. You come perhaps to see the old mission church. It contains some rare old books and a few pictures. The plate is now all gone. Was stolen some years ago.

LLOYD. I come to bear a message from Don Gregorio.

DON PANCHO. I receive no messages from the gentleman you mention.

LLOYD. To say that the statement made in your house this evening was false. He has no claims upon the child, Pepita.

DON PANCHO. I have no knowledge of any child you speak of. I have the privilege of bidding you good evening.

LLOYD. Whether you speak of her or not, I will speak of her. I mean to marry your grand-daughter. So there. I love her; there! And she loves me - there! And I think you are an old pride fool. There! There!

(Enter Doctor and Padre at the noise. Don Pancho

is breathless with astonishment).

DOCTOR. Why Mr. Lloyd, you are here! It is a night of surprises. Don Pancho, as my patient, I command you to go back to bed. Donya Elisa, you are usually my best of nurses. But to-night I must reprimand you. You are negligent.

DONYA ELISA. We were speaking of Pepita - -

DON PANCHO. Elisa, we were speaking of no such person. There is no such person to your knowledge. There never has been, there never will be, do you hear? Don Enrique we were speaking of the donkeys, of the sparrows that display their lusts from every house-top. Souls of the damned in inferno, shrieking with the laughter of maniacs. Every man was brought there by a woman. Every woman came from there to earth. By the cross, Pancho, you are mixed in your religion. Women are not made of stuff from Heaven. They are fashioned of the dust and dirt of Hell. Oh, Satan, how clever is thy handiwork. Thou makest up so trim and neat a parcel that we call it names like innocence of girlhood. We know we lie, we love our self-fooling. We say how pure she is, the spotless virgin. By God, I tell you Doctor, if we but knew it, a young girl's mind is, of all things the most rotten. Faugh! I can not speak the words because a woman - (Pointing to his wife) Oh we are cowards, hypocrites, all liars!

DOCTOR. Perhaps now you are warmed up to the subject, you will be able to do justice to us men.

LOYD. I call such jargon simply craziness. And I for one, will not let it pass unchallenged. You are an old blackguard, sir, and spit because you're in a passion. But your poison vomit shall not sully us. You're a pampered old booby, that's what you are. If it hadn't been that you had always had such sweet and saintly women as your servants, you would not now be raving as you are. You treat them like slaves, sir, - like slaves. Your wife and your grand-daughter, - I have seen it. I have not the honor of having known your mother, no more your daughter whom you have ruined, but if they are anything like Donya Elisa and Pepita,

I know they are the sweetest, kindest women that ever breathed. Oh, you stand there and foam out about the women, but if any of them has gone wrong, sir, depend on it, it has been through a man's selfishness, a man's viciousness. Jiminy! When I think of it, I get so excited, I could just whirl round and round till I am dizzy.

DON PANCHO. Don Enrique, good physician, is it not in your power to administer to this babe a dose of soothing syrup? He seems to be somewhat troubled in his sleep.

DOCTOR. I seem to have several patients on my hands this evening, and Donya Elisa is almost fainting from fatigue. First you, Don Pancho, must come back to your bed, and Don Francisco will no doubt counsel with my countryman. We too, have our little warmth as well as the Spaniards and the women are a delicate point with us.

LLOYD. (Stubbornly) I don't care if I am a fool and told so, but before Don Pancho goes back to his bed, I should like to have this little matter finished. To you, Doctor, I can speak without so much excitement. I come from Don Gregorio Duval to say from him to Don Pancho, Donya Elisa, and you all, that what he said this evening when you were at the table was false, and said entirely for spite. That he has never had any - - that he has no claims whatever on Pepita and knows absolutely nothing of her parentage.

PADRE. What! Does he confess so much?

DOCTOR. But my dear fellow this is a fairy tale you are telling us, and you, yourself, would see the absurdity of it were you not such a newcomer in La Guara. The facts of Don Gregorio's relations in this matter have been known by everybody in the village for the past fourteen years. Why Don Gregorio himself has often told me -

DON PANCHO. (Raging) Dupe! Fool! Blockhead! Tool of women! Thy name is Pancho Morales, thy name is man. Oh, how could I have been such an idiot? Such a blind old cow to eat anything they fed

me. Even the servants and the children of the streets have querked their fingers as I strutted like a turkey cock before them.

DONYA ELISA. Pancho, will you listen to the Doctor? It may be the American youth is right.

PADRE. I am sure there is some truth in this confession of Don Gregorio.

DOCTOR. Impossible! How can there be, I tell you? Everyone in the village knows the case.

LLOYD. Did not everyone in the village get his information primarily from Don Gregorio?

DONYA ELISA. Yes, yes, everybody; everybody.

LLOYD. Well, he lied. He lied from the first. He saw his chance and wanted vengeance.

DOCTOR. Then why does he tell now?

LLOYD. His vengeance is the better brought about when he can show Don Pancho that he has burned his his house for nothing. He has completed his ruin through a device. The facts were not the cause, but Don Gregorio.

DONYA ELISA. It is true that the story came from him. No word was ever spoken by my daughter.

DON PANCHO. Woman, you have no daughter. You never will have. It is my will. Do you hear? It is my will. As for this pettifogging tale of this young upstart, I do not believe it. It is merely of his madness.

LLOYD. I can go and get Don Gregorio to vouch for it. He is waiting even now at my lodgings.

DOCTOR. It might help to clear up the case if you did so. It might be then that we could get a little rest.

PADRE. Let us have him and hear the truth. It is our duty.

LLOYD. You wait... I will have him in ten minutes. (Exit).

DON PANCHO. What folderol are we up to? Tell me anyway. Do we wait here because that hair-brained boy demands it? (Enter Pepita, Clotilde and Antonio with a jar of hot water.) Pepita! Ah! (Ignoring her, and turning on the Padre.) Don Francis-

co, have you turned your church into a dance hall? All the riff-raff of the town is coming here. (Turning again, looking over Pepita's head.) Ah, Clotilde, and what! Antonio with you? Well, well, boy, what significance has this? You take advantage of the occupation of the duenya. You are a sly little dog, I fear, Antonio. But Clotilde is a dear girl, and of good family. We shall yet hear wedding bells from this wild night.

CLOTILDE. We brought hot water for your pains, Godfather, from Donya Linda, and she herself accompanied us to the door. She would not come in, because she had no mantilla, and she said to enter the church without one would show disrespect.

DON PANCHO. You are a dear little God-daughter. Come, let me kiss you. I - I - have only you now. My child, my little child.

CLOTILDE. You have Pepita, too -

DON PANCHO. Pepita! Everyone screams to me Pepita. The very rats and mice, I think, are called Pepita, so often do I hear that name pronounced. Child, speak to me no more the name of Pepita. I know no such person nor care to know her. If there is that about me that is indecent, that shames me, I throw it aside, and walk straight on my way. Yea, though it be the fleece that lines my heart. I tear it out and cast it in the ashes.

PADRE. You are strong and can do these things, but what of the soft hearts of women?

DON PANCHO. Let women walk in the ways of righteousness and they will not find themselves without support.

PADRE. There are some that have never deviated from that path, but suffering through the sins of luckless parents are set by you with those who vilely got them.

DON PANCHO. The sins of the father shall be visited even on the third and fourth generation.

DOCTOR. In that way of condemning, who of us shall go free?

DON PANCHO. What you, too, Don Enrique, turn

against me and counsel shame upon me! Would you too, have me sit in the open sunlight and brazenly parade my running sores out in the plaza? Oh, fie upon you all! Have you no dignity? No sense of modesty among you? I say this thing is obscene. It is obscene. (Pacing back in his excitement, he crosses by Pepita, who clings to his feet, kissing them).

PEPITA. Papa!

DON PANCHO. Faugh, the foulness clings to my boots. (Shakes her off.) Elisa. Elisa. Bring me other boots, my shoes, my slippers. Take these off. Cast them into the streets. They are unclean. Their stench is unendurable.

DONYA ELISA. Pancho! (Kneels at his feet).

DON PANCHO. The boots! Off with them! Hurry! (Donya Elisa takes off his shoes.) There, that is better, though I walk bare-footed on the pointed stones and cactus of the desert. I will walk unsullied, uncontaminated.

(Donya Elisa then takes Pepita away, beckoning to Clotilde to follow. She starts).

DON PANCHO. Clotilde. Come here, child. I wish to speak to you, and Antonio. I wish you both together. So it is to be a marriage, is it? I see it in your eyes. Ah, to be young again! To be innocent. (He dismisses them, but they linger till he can speak and has overcome his emotion.) There, Antonio, take her to Donya Linda or some protectress. Donya Elisa is occupied already. You must keep your little treasure unsullied - unsullied. Don't go to Donya Elisa or those near her. (They go out.) The ways of honor and pride, may still lead forward. (He breaks down with grief, but recovers himself at once on the entrance of Lloyd and Don Gregorio. Donya Elisa also comes in after them. Don Pancho turns to the Padre.) Don Francisco, I congratulate you on the success of your reception. All of the inhabitants of La Guara will soon be present.

LLOYD. Here he is; now we'll have this matter settled.

DON GREGORIO. (Bowing to all affably.) Good Evening. Ah, Doctor... Don Francisco... This young friend of mine insisted on dragging me here. I had no idea I should find myself in such pleasant company.

LLOYD. Insist! Dragging! Did you not come of your own accord?

DON GREGORIO. Why, I did not wish to have it understood that I came with your hand on my collar. I walked with you, at your desire, I am sure.

LLOYD. To corroborate the statements that I have already made about your relations with, - with regard to Pepita.

DON GREGORIO. Why, of that I had no inkling until now. You take me by surprise; you young Americans.

LLOYD. Do you not come here to say that the statement made by you in the house of Don Pancho this evening was absolutely and utterly false?

DON GREGORIO. Most assuredly, I come for nothing of the kind.

LLOYD. What, after you promised me! Here!

DON GREGORIO. My dear young friend, you speak in enigmas. Don Enrique, is this common among the youth of your countrymen?

LLOYD. You told me you would swear before Don Pancho that you never had any intimacy with his daughter.

DON GREGORIO. No, I did not.

LLOYD. There, by that stone which covers a passage that leads down into the crypt.

DON GREGORIO. No.

LLOYD. Where this night you removed some of the church plate which you stole from the church some ten years ago.

DON GREGORIO. I know nothing of what you are speaking.

LLOYD. (To the Doctor and others) He lies! He lies! I will prove it. I will show you.

(Don Gregorio makes motion to draw his revolver, but the Padre steps in front of him.)

PADRE. This is the house of God.

LLOYD. (Runs over, lifts the trap and leaps down with the lighted lantern.) I will show you whence he has stolen the treasure. Perhaps I can find his tracks, or perhaps there is still some of his plunder left. (Disappears.)

DON GREGORIO. Damn him! (He runs after and also leaps down into the hole. Jose enters).

DON PANCHO. Jose. Replace that stone in the floor. Gently... That will do, don't pinch your fingers.

(Jose does as he is bid. Don Pancho steps on the stone.) There now, perhaps we can have a little quiet. For myself, I find I am growing very sleepy. Jose, push my bed out here. The air is better. With your permission, Don Francisco, I will sleep here instead of in the sacristy. I find it not so stuffy nor so damp.

(Jose appears pushing a heavy couch before him.)

Right here, boy; the head on this stone. That will hold it down and keep it from rattling. Now, gentlemen, I am very comfortable, thank you. Don Francisco, I can never thank you for your gracious hospitality of this evening. Doctor, until to-morrow. Good night.

(He lies down on the couch. They go off.)

(Curtain)

ACT III

Scene: Hospital of the Sacred Heart, La Guara. Sisters move in the back-ground. In front are three beds occupied by Don Pancho, Don Gregorio and Lloyd. Don Pancho is in the middle bed, flanked on either side by his enemies. Lloyd and Don Gregorio are much bandaged from their fight, broken legs, arms, heads, etc. They speak to each other, but Don Pancho ignores both.

LLOYD. What a long day! It seems as if it will never end.

DON GREGORIO. Each day is longer than all the others put together.

LLOYD. This makes seven days now that we have been here.

DON GREGORIO. And this day is only five-eighths done. It is half past three.

LLOYD. At three o'clock it was three-fifths done.

DON GREGORIO. Three-fifths! I don't see how you make that out.

LLOYD. Why I reckon the day begins at six and ends at nine. That's when the lights go out.

DON GREGORIO. Those hours when the lights are out are twice as long as the others. The only rational way of reckoning a day is from midnight to midnight like the rail-roads.

LLOYD. Oh, I sleep through the night like a top. Sometimes I sleep in the day. Just now I have had a long doze. When I last looked at the clock -

(Don Pancho, whose temper has been rising, pounds violently on the floor with his stick until a sister

comes.)

SISTER ELENA. Is there anything I can do for you, Don Pancho?

DON PANCHO. Has Sister Teresa not come up from the office?

SISTER ELENA. Not yet, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. She is much occupied, I suppose.

SISTER ELENA. I suppose it, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. She promised to reconsider my desire to be removed to another room.

SISTER ELENA. Yes, Don Pancho, I have been told that she is doing so.

DON PANCHO. Will you go and see if she has entered the ward? (Sister Elena is going.) Stop! I would speak to you a moment.

SISTER ELENA. Yes, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. The day seems uncommonly short in passing.

SISTER ELENA. I am glad you are so comfortable, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. It seems but yesterday since I came here. Or would seem so if I were in another room.

SISTER ELENA. Yes, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. It is twenty-five minutes to four. It is not half past three.

SISTER ELENA. You can see the clock on the wall.

DON PANCHO. And the day is three-quarters gone. Every day begins at six, the way nature intended it to do. And they are not subject to change and rearrangement by every petty whim and wish of man.

SISTER ELENA. No doubt you are correct, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. Of course I am correct, because I am rational. And the rail-roads are wrong; they are always wrong. Like everything else of our damned Yankee civilization.

SISTER ELENA. I will go and see if Sister Teresa is returned. (Starts.)

LLOYD. Will you give me a glass of water, Sister Elena. (She gives him a drink.) The water tastes so

cool from your hand.

SISTER ELENA. Thank you, Don Jorge. You are very kind.

DON PANCHO. Sister Elena, the water here tastes particularly warm and insipid. I wonder that they can offer it to a pig.

DON GREGORIO. I will take a drink, too, Sister Elena. (Drinks.) The water is warm and insipid.

DON PANCHO. Give me a drink, Sister Elena. (drinks) The water is not warm nor insipid. Neither is it cool and fresh. It is, By God, it is boiling. It is boiling. Do you hear me? What damned, stupid idiot would ever ask for a drink of water.

SISTER ELENA. I will go and call Sister Teresa.

DON PANCHO. Do so, and get me out of this Hell hole. I am worn out with staying in one place, and my case requires company. Companionship. I need someone to speak with I tell you. No matter if it is the lowest peon or an Indian. I can't endure the empty beds. The empty beds! It seems as if the days would never end. By God, I mean the time flies. It courses. Only I want companionship, conversation. If it is no more than the grunting of a hog or the whine of a cat. Somebody! Somebody! Somebody! (Sister Elena returns with Sister Teresa.) Well! Well! Here you are again, Sister Teresa. And now am I to be changed to another room?

SISTER TERESA. It is impossible, Don Pancho. I have looked over all the records of the hospital. Such an instance is not mentioned in all our history going back to 1623.

DON PANCHO. Do you mean to say it is specially forbidden?

SISTER TERESA. Even so. In the instructions given by the sainted Padre, Don Francisco de Vaca de Alvarez, in the document sent from Madrid, for the especial government and control of this hospital, it is stated as I have mentioned to you before, in Article nine, Clause thirty-two, that no patient -

DON PANCHO. Yes, yes, yes. I have heard that before.

But I am tired of this place, I tell you. I ought not to have been put here in the first place.

SISTER TERESA. It is especially stated in the Instructions, Article eight, Clause fifty-four, that each patient shall be assigned to a bed according to the time of his arrival. Now in your case, you were brought to us after Don Jorge Lloyd, and before Don Gregorio Duval. About this, I knew that there could be no mistake. But the one point on which the doubt could be raised was that you really came to the hospital after both Don Jorge and Don Gregorio, but Don Gregorio being delayed in the operating room, his case being a difficult one, requiring amputation, your honored arrival into this ward was between that of Don Jorge and Don Gregorio. I have examined the records to see if an exception has ever been made in the case of one coming to the hospital from the outside, and not passing through the operating room as did Don Jorge and Don Gregorio. But -

DON PANCHE. It is your decision that I must remain where I am.

SISTER TERESA. It would be dangerous to establish a precedent. But I will write to the Archbishop of the Diocese. If it were not that he is now in the city of Mexico, or may even have departed for the mother country -

DON PANCHE. Write to him. Write to him if he is in Halifax.

SISTER TERESA. Yes, Don Pancho; I hope Sister Elena does everything within her power for your comfort. (A bell rings.) It is the hour for the admission of visitors. Perhaps it is Donya Elisa to see you. (Retires. Sister Elena also withdraws.)

LLOYD. I'll bet it's my mother! I'll bet it's her ring! I'd know it among a million by Jiminy!

(Enter Mrs. Lloyd with Sister Elena. She is an ordinary American matron of well-to-do life. She is nervous and on the point of crying.)

MRS. LLOYD. Is he in this room? My Georgy?

LLOYD. Mummy! It's Mummy! By Jiminy.

MRS. LLOYD. Georgie! (Runs up and in her excitement is about to embrace Don Gregorio.) Oh!

LLOYD. Here, Mummy, here.

MRS. LLOYD. (Runs up to Don Pancho's bed.) Oh!

LLOYD. You're warmer, Mummy! You're getting hot. (She reaches his bed.) Oh Mummy! (They kiss and embrace with great enthusiasm.)

MRS. LLOYD. You are not dead, dear boy? You are not dying? Oh, I have been in such agony since your telegram.

LLOYD. Why, I said slightly injured.

MRS. LLOYD. I know. I know. But I felt it was more than slightly. I felt it.

LLOYD. Only a leg broken and a few bumps. It's nothing. We have a very good doctor here. A New Yorker. You must see him; he is a very fine fellow.

MRS. LLOYD. And your leg is broken? Oh, will you be lame?

LLOYD. Not at all; I shall dance at my wedding.

MRS. LLOYD. And you fell, you say, through the floor of a church.

LLOYD. A stone misplaced. They had forgot to put it down.

MRS. LLOYD. My dear boy. My darling, my baby. You might have been killed. It was miraculous. You must promise me never to go into one of these churches again.

LLOYD. That's easy. Were you comfy on the train?

MRS. LLOYD. Oh, very, and I met such nice people, and they were all of them so interested in you.

LLOYD. Oh, 'twas you they were interested in, old Mummy. Did you come from the station directly here?

MRS. LLOYD. Of course and I shall remain here till you are well. Now, I'll lay off my wraps and take care of you; and you shall keep still and not excite yourself. Here are your medicines on the table. I trust they are homeopathic. No, this looks suspicious. I must speak to the Doctor about it. I will explain your delicate constitution.

LLOYD. Old Mummy. Don't think about medicines.

I want to talk to you; I want to marry.

MRS. LLOYD. Marry! Why, you're but a baby. Oh, dear, he's getting delirious. It's the excitement. Oh, it was wrong for me to come this way unannounced. It was wicked. Oh, Georgie, don't you know me, your poor old Mummy.

LLOYD. Of course I know you. There! There! I'm not delirious. You're the dearest old Mummy. There, there!

MRS. LLOYD. But you were delirious a moment ago. You actually spoke about marrying.

LLOYD. Well Mummy, don't you believe a man should marry?

MRS. LLOYD. A man! You are a mere boy. A baby.

LLOYD. I'm twenty-four. I've been five times engaged. You ought to be getting used to it by this time.

MRS. LLOYD. Why, so I am. It's all right, I am sure. Only before, you always spoke of them as engagements and this time you said marry. I was startled.

LLOYD. That's it... That's just the difference with this one. And oh, Mummy, she's the sweetest little thing. You will love her like a daughter, I know it.

MRS. LLOYD. I'm sure I tried to love the other four.

LLOYD. Oh, but this one, mother. She's an angel. She's Spanish. Her name's Pepita. Isn't that a pretty name?

MRS. LLOYD. Pepita... Let's see... The others were Margaret, and Betty, and Jessica, -

LLOYD. But, oh Mummy, this one is so different. And she's young and of very good family. Her grandfather is of pure old Castilian stock. He is really quite a prince in this neighborhood. And the grandmother is such a lady. Donya Elisa... Oh, there's nothing in Jersey like these old Spanish families.

MRS. LLOYD. Are they very wealthy? You speak of their station.

LLOYD. They have been, - very... They owned the whole country before the Mexican war. But you know Mother, after that, the Yankees stole everything, al-

most. It's the disgrace of our nation, old Manning. Now everything almost is gone from them. A week ago their big house burned down. It was the night of my accident, old Manning.

Mrs. Laura. Is her mother -

Laura. Her mother's dead, Manning. Yet won't mind that. You will be her only mother, won't you Manning? Her father, she really knows. She's lived with her grand-parents. But the father is of good French family. A man of talents.

Mrs. Laura. These, - these people, are not after you for your money, dear George?

Laura. Oh, Manning! How could you? Indeed not. Why, the fact is, they're opposed to the marriage. Don Francisco, - that's her grand-father, - a rare old gentleman, the real Spanish cream, University of Madrid, - he speaks a dozen languages like water. Why, he's opposed to me. Think! I'm not good enough. His vast his grand-daughter off, in love. He won't speak to her. The grand-mother, too, has been decided to shelter her. You must protect her; you must shield her, dear old Manning. Her grand-mother wants her to go into this convent, - he's sure. She is here now, in retirement. Oh, my darling! Why, Manning, she is only fourteen years old, - just like Juliet. You love Juliet, Manning, and you'll love my little Pégua.

Mrs. Laura. I'm sure I think nobody, nobody, is too good to marry my son.

Laura. There, there! You don't know the Spanish pride. We don't have anything like it back in Jersey.

Mrs. Laura. My mother was a Howard. I'm sure no Spanish family is older than the Howards. We trace our ancestry down from the time of William the Conqueror. Sir Landrey Howard was a knight close to the throne.

Laura. Well, I don't care anything about ancestors, for my part, only I know I love little Pégua. You'll be kind to her, won't you, dear Manning? You'll be a mother to her in her loneliness, won't you?

MRS. LLOYD. Why, I'll do what you want, always, Georgie.

LLOYD. There, there! I knew you would. I knew it. I'll send for the little thing, presently. You'll see what an angel she is. A little, shy wood-dove of a wifey.

MRS. LLOYD. Now you must not talk. I insist on it. I brought you kindest love from your father, and love from your sisters and cousins. Now, don't talk. No, Hush: I won't listen. No more... I will close up my ears. (She sits down and takes out her work after making herself comfortable and tidy. Enter Donya Elisa. Don Pancho, through this interview, has proudly been trying not to listen, but of course has overheard every word).

DONYA ELISA. Good afternoon, Pancho. Did you rest well during your siesta?

DON PANCHO. (Starts to curse, but remembers Mrs. Lloyd who is sitting on the other side of his bed. - She is between the beds of her son and Don Pancho. - He can only reply with a shade of sarcasm.) Most excellently, Elisa. The time passed very quickly.

DONYA ELISA. I tried to get the eau de Cologne, but they were out of it at the drug-store. Wasn't that careless? They had sent to Santa Fe; of course they said so, but it may be a week before they hear from there. Alfonso knows I always use it, too, and at this time especially, in case of sickness. I must try and borrow of someone in the village. Donya Linda has not a drop nor Donya Julia.

MRS. LLOYD. (To Donya Elisa.) I beg pardon, I hope you will not consider it an intrusion, but I couldn't help overhearing what you said. Now I have of eau de Cologne a large bottle. My son is so fond of it, and it is so useful in hospitals. (Taking a bottle from her bag.) I hope you will permit me to share this with you. I shall really be unhappy if you don't.

DONYA ELISA. I am deeply indebted, madam, for your kindness, but -

MRS. LLOYD. No, no, I will hear of no excuses. We

must help each other, we women who have troubles. Has your husband been long in the hospital? I am here to take care of my son.

DONYA ELISA. My husband has been here six days.

MRS. LLOYD. Oh, then they must have been acquainted already. In sickness, we must break down all barriers and be brothers and sisters. Do you not think so? Our sorrow is a common tie to unite us.

DONYA ELISA. You are very kind, madam, I assure you.

MRS. LLOYD. There I see you do not like my interruption. But you must accept of the Cologne. It is no matter. I will speak to this gentlemen over here. (To Don Gregorio.) You, sir, do not have any woman to attend you.

DON GREGORIO. Madam, I am not so fortunate as many.

MRS. LLOYD. Well, I shall come to see you every day and give you precisely the same attention as my son. I am sure you know him now and therefore love him. Are you very ill? Have you been in the hospital long? DON GREGORIO. Six days, madam.

MRS. LLOYD. Why, you both came on the same day as Georgie. Are you injured? (Glances at the bed.) Oh, dear, it is so terrible.

DON GREGORIO. An accident... I fell through a hole in the church floor. My leg was broken. Amputation was thought necessary.

MRS. LLOYD. Oh, how terrible! I see: - off at the thigh. Oh you dear man. You must let me come to see you. Why, my Georgie fell through a hole in the church floor, too. Why, it must be as full of holes as a colander. He broke his leg, too, but it was not amputated. Oh, dear, the similarity of the two cases shall make me think of you both as my own children. Oh, these church floors are terrible, - simply terrible. I shall see the town authorities about it.

(Enter Sister Dolores, a nun about thirty years old, blooming, calm, self-contained. She goes up to Lloyd's bed and gives him a letter. She keeps her back turned

toward Don Pancho. Lloyd, who has been feigning sleep to please his mother, sits up and begins to read eagerly, after kissing the letter passionately several times. Mrs. Lloyd, ever watchful, becomes jealous. Don Pancho tries not to listen to the following conversation, but cannot restrain his interest. Donya Elisa is unaffectedly moved.)

DON GREGORIO. (Unnoticed by Mrs. Lloyd.) I fear, Madam, you will find the town authorities to be of a very different type to those found in your most excellent American cities. We lack here what you so generously offer to supply, namely, the interest and enthusiasm of a public-spirited woman. A lady like yourself with your energy and your beauty and accomplishment, can effect wonders, as I have no doubt you have done already in your own locality. We are here but an -

MRS. LLOYD. Yes: but excuse me; I must go to my son. He seems to have received a letter, presumably one of mine, from the eagerness which he shows in perusing it. I will come back and talk with you later on. There is much in what you say of this matter. (She crosses over to Lloyd.) Georgie. Georgie. Georgie.

LLOYD. (Who does not hear her at first.) Oh Mummy, I'm so happy! I'm so happy! It's been all arranged. She will! She will! We're to be married, Mummy, to-day at five o'clock.

DON PANCHO. What! Never! Never! I shall prevent it. (To Donya Elisa.) I am speaking, dear, of the affair you mentioned to me. Juan shall never have that hen. It belongs to Maria.

MRS. LLOYD. Married! To-day! I, - I, don't understand. It is impossible!

LLOYD. (From his reading.) The priest approves of everything, and she will wear her white dress and a veil, and Sister Dorores will act as her own mother and give her away. Oh, she is such a darling. Jiminy!

DON PANCHO. By all the powers of light and darkness, this shall not be. Rather will I unseat Hell and Heaven. Rather shall the earth be set adrift bumping and

bobbing in the firmament than that this thing shall be allowed to come to pass. I am speaking, Elisa, of that hen.

MRS. LLOYD. But, Georgie, my son, this is too sudden. You must first get the consent of your father.

LLOYD. (Who has finished reading, with a sigh, and is now putting kisses on the paper.) But, Mummy, the Governor will do what you say. You know that you can twist him around your finger. And you have consented already.

MRS. LLOYD. Why, no, Georgie. I said I'd consider the matter. I was kindly disposed toward the girl. I would protect her.

LLOYD. But look here Mummy. You'd better get me married. I tell you, you have no idea of the responsibility you take on your shoulders, if you refuse to let me marry when I want to. This wild west is something terrible. Something terrible, for a young man. The snares and temptations that beset a young man's path on every side.

MRS. LLOYD. Yes, I know it. I would much rather have you back home.

LLOYD. But I can't go home, Mummy. You know I can't. The Governor wants me to strike out and make my fortune. I have bargained for a ranche already, Mother, and you know what a western ranche life may become without some sweet woman's influence to keep it pure. To direct it in the channels of - of virtue and domesticity, Mummy.

MRS. LLOYD. Well, I'm sure Georgie there is much in what you say and - and I'll see the girl and if she is all that you represent. - - Can we call her in?

DON PANCHO. Elisa, bring me my trousers. Bring them instantly. Bring my shoes; bring my hat. Bring everything.

MRS. LLOYD. Do you think the old gentleman is quite safe?

LLOYD. Oh, perfectly... He's a perfect gentleman. The old school... A real Spanish hidalgo.

DON PANCHO. The villain, the villain. The young

villain! I mean Juan, for having taken that hen.

SISTER DOLORES. Would it not be better, madam, if I took you to see the young lady. She is waiting below to receive you.

DON PANCHO. She shall not go, Sister, - Sister -

SISTER DOLORES. My name is Sister Dolores.

DON PANCHO. Sister Dolores, I beg pardon for not knowing it. I would, - I wish to speak with you a moment.

SISTER DOLORES. Willingly... Speak, Don Pancho Morales.

DON PANCHO. This, - this young man who says - he will, - he wishes to marry the child, - oh somebody, - How can you permit such an abomination? The child, - the person, is under your protection, is she not?

SISTER DOLORES. She is my ward, sir. She came to me crying and helpless, when her former guardians, without reason, cast her off.

DON PANCHO. No matter... You should make her enter the convent, - become a nun. Anything better than marry that - that - gentleman, - in fact than marry at all.

SISTER DOLORES. Pepita does not wish to enter the cloister. It is not the custom of the Church to go against the wishes of the suppliant.

DON PANCHO. Oh, damn the - - I beg your pardon, Sister Dolores, but the Padre, Don Francisco de Cabeza, - he is the spiritual guardian of this outcast. He surely would have her enter the convent.

SISTER DOLORES. On the contrary, he wishes the marriage. He approves of Don Jorge most heartily, and himself has made all the arrangements. Indeed, he is to perform the ceremony, this afternoon at half past five. It was only the arrival of the young gentleman's mother, - that may put a different light on the matter.

DON PANCHO. Quite right! Quite right! I must speak to her. An excellent lady... A perfect gentlewoman... Also, I must speak to Don Francisco.

Kindly send a messenger to him. Tell him it is important that I speak with him.

SISTER DOLORES. He is much occupied at present, Don Pancho. I will send, however, the message you desire. Is there anything further you would speak to me?

DON PANCHO. (Who half suspects that she is his daughter.) I, - yes; that is - no... Leave me!... Leave me!

SISTER DOLORES. (To Mrs. Lloyd.) Now madam, I will conduct you to Pepita.

MRS. LLOYD. Well, if I must, I must. (Crying.) Oh Georgie... My darling... My son...

LLOYD. There, Mummy... Old Mummy... Dear Mummy. (Embracing her.) And remember and be good to my darling. Remember I love her. I love her, Mummy.

(Exit Sister Dolores and Mrs Lloyd.)

DON PANCHO. Elisa, go at once, and despatch a messenger for Don Francisco de Cabeza. I must see him at once. At once... It is important. Sister Dolores will never send. Go, I tell you!

(Exit Donya Elisa. Don Pancho sinks back, breathing heavily. Lloyd begins to re-read and kiss his letter quite engrossed. Don Gregorio surveys the situation.)

DON GREGORIO. Don Pancho Morales, I am the only man who can help you get your will. Despise me if you like. Refuse to speak to me if you like. I am still the one man who can help you, who can speak to this woman, his mother, and get her to have the wedding postponed. You think the priest, Don Francisco, will help you, but you are mistaken. He will not come, or if he comes, he will refuse you. You, yourself, are lying helpless, your legs paralyzed. They will mock you, for you are now a king no longer. I can help you. I alone can speak the word.

DON PANCHO. What could Don Gregorio Duval do if he chose?

DON GREGORIO. Exercise my right as her real father. The girl is not yet of age.

DON PANCHO. Don Gregorio Duval's right is not recognized by the state.

DON GREGORIO. The woman will recognize it, if the state will not.

DON PANCHO. The woman is in the power of her son.

DON GREGORIO. She shall be in my power when I have finished.

DON PANCHO. Why should Don Gregorio Duval concern himself in this matter?

DON GREGORIO. To help you... You will not believe it? Very well, then, accept another reason. Say, to still show that I have power in the world. To feel that I have not lost, - have not lost everything. It is a bitter thing to feel that one has lost everything. Eh? Is it not so, Don Pancho?

DON PANCHO. My God! My God! What do I think?

DON GREGORIO. Let me tell you what you think. Let me tell you. You think rather than lose your control over those that you have so long owned, rather than admit yourself helpless before them, you will even stoop to a union with your old life-long enemy, you will abet him. After all, he is a brave man and a gentleman.

DON PANCHO. Yes, yes! We must not forsake our confidence in a gentleman. All else, all else, is slipping from us.

DON GREGORIO. And after all, you do not need to ally yourself with me before a man. All you need to do is to keep silence. Affect a sleep. It is the easiest, the most dignified.

DON PANCHO. Yes, yes! Why should I concern myself about the matter? I will sleep... I will sleep... I will not speak.

DON GREGORIO. It is understood, then, I am to act in this matter.

DON PANCHO. It is understood. It is, yes, - it is understood.

(Enter the Padre.)

DON GREGORIO. Don Francisco de Cabeza... Not a word to him. If I am to act in this matter, it must be

alone.

DON PANCHO. What! Do you mean to say I am still in your power?

DON GREGORIO. If you want what you say... You are in my power. He cannot help you. I can.

PADRE. Ah, Don Pancho... I met Donya Elisa, in the patio. She says you wish to see me. You are well? (Bowing.) Don Gregorio Duval. Don Jorge. He does not hear me. No matter... We shall wake him. Was it something particular, Don Pancho?

DON PANCHO. Why, my dear boy, it is always particular that you do not forget an old man in his afflictions. All the day I have not seen you, save this morning, a slight nod as to a stranger in passing.

PADRE. I have been very busy, Don Pancho, about other affairs.

DON PANCHO. And now, all is arranged for your little wedding.

PADRE. Oh, Don Pancho, then you will speak of it? You will let me talk to you?

DON PANCHO. If talking means pleading, no, no! You must know Panchito, that above all things, I am a gentleman. That dishonor shall never with me be accepted or forgiven. You have known me long, Pancho, have you not? Have you ever known of my word once established, to be torn down?

PADRE. You have been strong, even to bitterness, Don Pancho.

DON PANCHO. Not bitterness... Only justice, my boy. The light of day, is it bitter because it sees the rattle-snake as well as the cactus flower? Because it recognizes one from the other?

PADRE. It gives to both its blessings.

DON PANCHO. But it points out to the traveller the difference. This is poison, it says of one; the other is beauty.

PADRE. Don Pancho, if you only knew. If I could tell you.

DON PANCHO. What then do you know that you have not told?

PADRE. I cannot tell. I cannot. Do not ask me.

(Enter Mrs. Lloyd, with Donya Elisa. They are chatting together very friendly.)

MRS. LLOYD. (To Lloyd.) What a charming little woman that is. Quite the lady... These Spanish women are certainly wonderful.

LLOYD. (Aroused from his letter and his dreams.) Mummy, you have seen her! How is she? Is she not beautiful, Mummy dear? Are you not proud of your daughter?

MRS. LLOYD. She is certainly an attractive little thing. I only wish that there were a little more regularity about this hastily planned marriage.

LLOYD. Now Mummy, you know I need a wife. You know you will feel safer if I am established.

MRS. LLOYD. Yes, and yet this is so very sudden.

LLOYD. Why all marriages are sudden, Mummy. They've got to be. Though the engagement lasts ten years. The marriage is sudden.

MRS. LLOYD. I fear she is very young and inexperienced.

LLOYD. But look at me... I have experience enough for two. I say, Mummy, old girl, did you kiss her?

MRS. LLOYD. Why, of course, I remembered my position as your -

LLOYD. (Throws his arms around her and kisses her.) You're a dear old Mummy, you are now. Jiminy.

(Enter Sister Dolores, with Pepita dressed in white and a veil like a girl for confirmation. The Padre crosses over to Lloyd's bed, and whispers to him. Lloyd awaits in an ecstasy of excitement. Don Panchito turns on his side, pretends to sleep. Donya Elisa cries softly. Don Gregorio is watchful. When Lloyd sees Pepita, he almost leaps out of bed, but is restrained by the Padre, who keeps him much in hand. Pepita is frightened but not shrinking. Sister Dolores is acting as her prompter. It is evident that she and the Padre are determined on this marriage. The ceremony proceeds according to the manner of the

Catholic Church. When the priest asks if there are any here who object to this man marrying this woman, Don Gregorio, partially rising in his bed, speaks).

DON GREGORIO. I do!

PADRE. (Much excited, but trying to keep control.) May I ask on what grounds are your objections?

DON GREGORIO. That girl is my daughter. She is not of age. I refuse to give her in marriage.

SISTER DOLORES. That is a lie! Before God, it is a lie!

DON PANCHE. What?

SISTER DOLORES. I was Estella Morales. Pepita was my daughter... My daughter... But in God's name, she was never his... Never his...

DON PANCHE. What?

SISTER DOLORES. (Looking at the Padre.) Her father was a young student, a friend of my family, not an enemy... He was studying for the priesthood... We sinned... I entered this convent. He was ordained. God is good... He has not trodden on our lives... He letteth the worm to live. He pitieth His children.

DON PANCHE. Estella! Elisa! Pepita!

SISTER DOLORES. Estella is dead to the world. Pepita shall live... Good Father, proceed with the marriage.

(Padre is going on blindly, when Don Pancho interrupts, after a struggle).

DON PANCHE. No! Stop! Don Francisco! Pepita!

PEPITA. Papa! (She breaks away from Sister Dolores and runs and throws her arms around Don Pancho's neck.)

MRS. LLOYD. (No one paying any attention to her.) Well, if I'd known... Well! My goodness! Oh, Georgie, is the old gentleman - etc. -

DON PANCHE. (Getting control of himself.) Move the beds up closer, my son's and mine. They move Lloyd's bed up close to Don Pancho's. He takes Lloyd's hand with his right, Pepita's with his left.) My children! (To the Padre.) Proceed!

(Curtain)

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